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I Am Complicated, and So Is My Blackness: A Trifecta Exploration of Educational Spaces and Identity Development

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I AM COMPLICATED, AND SO IS MY BLACKNESS: A TRIFECTA
EXPLORATION OF EDUCATIONAL SPACES AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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December 2018

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, my children, my parents, my grandmother, and my ancestors upon whose shoulders I stand. It is through your experiences that I learned how to navigate the spaces around me. The code-switching, the incidents of White privilege, the when and how loud I need to be when making my voice heard, I observed and practiced with you first. I am extremely thankful for the support and encouragement toward my academic endeavors. I also dedicate this dissertation to all the marginalized people of Color whose voices remain silenced by their oppressors. It is for my children and for you that my voice will remain loud, Black, and proud. To my family, thank you for being caring and understanding, and most of all offering words of encouragement throughout the process. I will forever remain grateful. To my parents, thank you for setting the bar high. You both completed post master's degree level work and of course I had to top that. Without your constant support and modeling, I would not have accomplished as much as I have and chose my area of research. I am also grateful for my children, Zora-Reign especially, who has been really patient, understanding and encouraging throughout this process and my son Langston for challenging me as a parent and educator. My grandmother for always keeping all us covered in prayer and my husband for just being the oppositional defiant person that you are. You never fail to challenge me and push me; if nothing else, push me to prove you wrong. You push me forward...never backwards. Therefore, I express my gratitude to each of you as I complete this rewarding process of earning a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Leadership and Research.

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“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.” Lena Horne

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Learn from my experiences, go forth and continue to prosper. Surpass every expectation your father and I have for you. You both are destined for GREATNESS!

To my families: Burrell, Martin, Hornsby, Terry, Feazell, and Howard, it is on your shoulders I stand. The chemistry, kinship, resiliency, intelligence, and love that we have is unsurmountable. To my parents, James and Pauline, there is nothing I can ever say to you that would come remotely close to what is in my heart. You guys were made especially for me and I don't think anyone else could have come close to giving me what I needed as parents other than you. I am grateful, grateful, grateful. Your love and support sustain me and fuels me to be the best parent I can be. You both should have earned Ph.D.'s before me; you are two of the smartest people I know (along with Cousin Travis and Maurice). I wouldn't hesitate to match your intellectual minds up with anyone in academia. To my dad and my cousin, Dr. Richard Peagler, thanks for sharing your research with me. Your research was instrumental in helping me through my process. My Ne-Ne, my prayer warrior, I take you everywhere I go. Your voice is always there in my head giving me all the nuggets of wisdom you have to give. Thank you for always being so generous with your love and with your scriptures. To my Auntie Orel who was the inspiration behind one of the titles of my papers, you are ABSOLUTELY the best. My aunties and uncles, hands down, are the cream of the crop. There has never been a time in my entire life where I did not feel loved or special. I have too many of you to name personally and not enough paper, but you know who you are. You each are responsible for supporting a piece of this puzzle called Kala. You laugh with me, Marco Polo me, feed me, take vacations with me, lift me up and pray for me and my family. My cousins, FamBam the Experience, priceless! My Baton Rouge family, you guys made living in the city an experience I will never forget. We have enough jokes and commentary now to last a lifetime. Ms. Brenda and Nick, you are

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To my Blackie and my Mason who I lost along this journey, I will find you again someday laughing it up loudly in Heaven. To my Grandma, rest her soul, she use to joke about

my first day of kindergarten. She said I came home saying, “ok, I’m good. I don’t need to go back there.” She must be beaming from ear to ear watching me get my Ph.D. and my granddaddy would have definitely pulled out his “real” wallet for this occasion. Rest their souls, I miss them all so much. I would trade this experience in a heartbeat just to have more time with them.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| ABSTRACT..... | x |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Introduction | 2 |
| Essay One | 4 |
| Essay Two | 4 |
| Essay Three | 5 |
| Purpose of Study | 7 |
| References | 7 |
| ARE (WE) GOING DEEP ENOUGH? A NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW ADDRESSING CRITICAL RACE THEORY, RACIAL SPACE THEORY, AND BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT | 10 |
| Theoretical Frameworks | 11 |
| Method | 21 |
| Findings | 24 |
| Discussion and Implications | 27 |
| References | 29 |
| THE FLY IN THE BOWL OF BUTTERMILK..... | 36 |
| Introduction | 36 |
| Purpose. Let It Shine | 40 |
| Method. The Bowl: Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, Autoethnography, and Racial Identity Development | 40 |
| Conclusion | 58 |
| References | 60 |
| A MIXED-METHODS ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL SPACES AND BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT | 65 |
| Introduction | 65 |
| Literature Review | 65 |
| Purpose..... | 69 |
| Research Questions..... | 70 |
| Method..... | 71 |
| Findings..... | 76 |
| Limitations | 84 |
| Discussion and Implications | 84 |
| References..... | 87 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 92 |
| APPENDIX A. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD | 93 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT | 94 |
| APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL..... | 97 |
| APPENDIX D. BLACK RACIAL IDENTITY ATTITUDE SCALE | 99 |
| APPENDIX E. PERMISSION..... | 101 |
| VITA..... | 102 |

ABSTRACT

Myriads of research studies have been written over the past 20 years highlighting the racial gap and disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes between Black and White students, but as revealed in a review of the literature, more studies need to be conducted that examine the intersection of race, space/place, and racial identity development. Using critical race theory as a framework, this study comprised of three separate, but related essays that explore the function of educational spaces in which Black Americans navigate, grow, and develop as it intersects with race, space/place, and identity development. Essay one is a critical narrative literature review that was conducted to examine how researchers addressed the concept of intersectionality using critical race theory, racial space theory, and Black identity development in current literature. Essay two was an autoethnographic essay about my personal educational journey through the stages of Black identity development using CRT and intersectionality as a lens to examine my experience. Using CRT as a framework, essay three was a mixed-methods study that captured the lived experiences of professionals across space/place using Neely and Samura's racial space theory (2011), racial identity development was explored utilizing interview responses, Cross's Nigrescence stages (1991, 1978, 1971), and Helm and Parham's Black racial identity attitude scale (1996, 1990).

INTRODUCTION

What Happens to a Dream Deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

--Langston Hughes
Selected Poems of Langston Hughes

Whatever happened to Michael and Anthony? What about Tammy? Oh, and Kincy (I never liked that chick anyway though). All these faces we've seen in school throughout the years, they come and go as swiftly as the seasons... in and out of our lives. Forgotten about, until that one conversation with a group of old friends when you all happen to be home for the holidays together. You find out that Michael is in jail, Anthony is dead (and not from natural causes), Tammy has 5 kids with 3 baby daddies and she still lives in your hometown working at Wal-Mart, and Kincy...you still don't care where she at. Surely, they all had dreams. What happened? Why did only a handful of Blacks make it out of your hometown and accomplish a level of success that you felt was worthy. Aren't we all walking around with dreams deferred? Mine currently "crusting and sugaring over like a syrupy sweet," but clearly every day we hear about those Black faces whose dreams are not what society deems as "American". Black dreams that are left to dry up, fester, stink, sag, or explode. Thinking to myself, "I want to be a dream keeper,

not a dream deflater” as my thoughts wander back to how trifling Kincy was and still is I’m sure. In my *Pretty Woman* narrator voice, “everyone has a dream, what’s yours.” How has your experiences and educational opportunities shaped you? Are you a Michael, Anthony, Tammy, or Kincy? Why can’t we all accomplish a level of success that makes us happy and content? Maybe because our dreams and experiences don’t WEIGH the same literally and figuratively.

Introduction

This dissertation is comprised of three separate, but related essays that examine the role of educational spaces on the identity development of Black professionals. Students today know bits and pieces of the struggles Black Americans have had to endure and overcome in an effort just to be recognized as a citizen of this nation, but even fewer have heard the voices of this struggle and understand how and why we as Black Americans do what we do. From loving ourselves to hating other Blacks, it is relative. The education of Black slaves in the United States before the end of the Civil War was seen to be a criminal offense, often a deadly one. Free Black communities sought to organize schools, but in totality few Blacks received any education before the Reconstruction Era when public schools were opened (Thelin, 2004). The commitment of Black teachers, the parents, and the community to education never faltered. Blacks established a tradition of educational self-help and were among the first southerners to campaign for universal public education. They welcomed the support of the Freedmen’s Bureau, white charities, and missionary societies. Black communities, many desperately poor, dug deep into their own resources to build and maintain schools that met their needs and reflected their values (Thelin, 2004).

The struggle for fair and equal education for Blacks has been long and hard. It has been over 200 years since Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, famously declared "all men are created equal" while owning slaves, over 100 years since W.E.B. DuBois spoke about the "color line", and over 20 years since Dr. Cornel West wrote a book about "Race Matters." Despite the time that has gone by, the concept of race continues to remain a central element of democracy in the United States and Black people continue to be challenged by racism in their educational journey (Yull, 2014). The process of integration significantly diminished Black educational spaces by nearly eliminating Black educators from the nation's teaching force, destroying bonds between Black teachers, students, and parents, closing Black schools, transferring Black students to white schools, and decentralizing Black communities (Charron, 2009; Ramsey, 2008; Siddle-Walker, 1996). Scholars like Crenshaw (1991), Delpit (2012) and Ladson-Billings (1998) have written much about institutionally racist beliefs that continue to bound true progress for Blacks. Myriads of research studies have been written over the past 20 years highlighting the racial gap and disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes between Black and White students, but as revealed in a review of the literature, more studies need to be conducted that examine the intersection of race, space/place, and racial identity development. Using critical race theory as a framework, these three essays explore the function of educational spaces in which Black Americans navigate, grow, and develop as it intersects with race, space/place, and identity development. Approaching my research from multiple perspectives was necessary in this study, as there is no "silver bullet or one size fit all" approach (Fletcher et al, 2016).

Essay One

The first study was a narrative literature review that was conducted to examine how researchers addressed the concept of intersectionality using critical race theory, racial space theory, and Black identity development in current literature. According to Petticrew and Roberts (2008), a narrative literature review “refers to a systemic review that synthesizes the individual studies...systematically extracting, checking, and narratively summarizing information on their methods and results” (Bennett, Driver, & Trent, 2017). The narrative literature review serves as a comprehensive, yet critical and objective analysis of a topic and the discussion and current knowledge that embodies it. Narrative literature reviews are an essential part of the research process and help to establish a theoretical framework for your research. Open coding was used to identify concepts and categories. This process helped to solidify and cluster the data into major themes that were presented in the research findings. Codes were based on the tenets of CRT, Black identity development stages, identity development characteristics, race, and place/space. The research showed multiple connections to race, student achievement, and space; however, limited research examined all the factors from an intersectionality viewpoint and tie it into the development of one’s identity development.

Essay Two

The second study was an autoethnographic article about my personal educational journey through the stages of Black identity development using CRT and intersectionality as a lens to examine my experience. Taking an autoethnographic approach allowed me to (re)engage and (re)flect upon my journey navigating educational spaces. This approach allowed me to highlight the dangers, dispositions, and decisions associated with engaging

in those spaces. Healthy racial identity development is believed to be the ultimate transformation of self. According to Benjamin, Constantine, Richardson, and Wilson (1998):

Healthy racial identity development is achieved when Blacks progress through a series of linear stages commencing with degrading thoughts and feelings about themselves and other Blacks accompanied by idealized beliefs about whites, and ends with internalized positive feelings about themselves, other Blacks and other racial groups (p. 96).

Pope-Davis, Liu, Ledesma-Jones, and Nevitt (2000) stated that “identification with one’s racial and cultural group represents a complex process” (p. 101), which does not happen overnight. This is why educational spaces are so important. They allow students to develop and interact with others from different backgrounds, thus allowing both students and teachers to see one another from a lens other than race.

For things to change, people must be aware of the unspoken truths that have suffocated some, emotionally wounded others, motivated a few, and empowered me. “I may play your game, but I am not your pawn,” said the fly in the bowl of buttermilk (Burrell-Craft, 2018).

Essay Three

This mixed-methods study focused and built upon the critical discourse of race in education by exploring the links between educational spaces and Black identity development. Critical race theory was the lens in which this article was explored. Theories involving race and place, along with the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (BRIAS) was utilized in this mixed-methods study. Race and space provided a lens for understanding the persistence of racism in the educational experiences and identity of Blacks (Yull, 2014). The exploration of place allowed me to elicit the voices and

experiences of those living in a rural versus urban or suburban environment. Prior research suggests the way that students perceive and experience race and racism may be different in small rural communities, with fewer populations of Black people, than in urban communities with larger populations of Black people (Yull, 2014). The exploration of the racial identity development allowed me to capture how educational spaces, places, and experiences intersect with race. Erik Erikson stated (1959), a sense of self (identity) is a relationship between one's (choice of) experiences within a specific environment. Schools serve as institutional spaces that unite systemic oppression and individual interactions between different social identities contributing to reproduction in larger society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 2000). Schools are places where knowledge about social norms and racial power are both constructed, perpetuated, and reinforced. A Student of Color experience is a product of one's sense of self, their social group memberships, and interactions across the length and breadth of industrial complex marked by a "Sea of Whiteness" (McCoy, 2014, p. 163). It is a delicate navigation and negation of the needs of self with the needs of others (Torres, V., Jones, S.R., & Renn, K.A., 2009). Using CRT as a framework and both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, this study of Black educational experiences captured through the lived experiences of professionals across space/place using Neely and Samura's (2011) racial space theory. Racial identity development was explored utilizing interview responses, the Black racial identity attitude scale (BRIAS) developed by Helm's and Parham (1996, 1990), and Cross's Nigrescence stages (1991, 1978, 1971).

Purpose of the Study

I have a burning need and desire to critically examine the nature of the Black educational journey and its double consciousness impact on the lives of countless and nameless Black people like me. My examination will necessitate looking into how the culture of Whiteness is developed, sustained, or challenged through educational spaces, as well as how Black identity development survives or succumbs in the process. The educational spaces, places, and experiences of Black Americans can have a positive or negative impact on their lives. It can affect their development, their mindset, their decisions, and it can control their lives and the lives of their families. The process of integration significantly diminished Black educational spaces by nearly eliminating Black educators from the nation's teaching force, destroying bonds between Black teachers, students, and parents, closing Black schools, transferring Black students to White schools, and decentralizing Black communities (Charron, 2009; Ramsey, 2008; Siddle-Walker, 1996). I hope to offer insight to educators and administrators who are unaware of their own role in the perpetuation of Whiteness in educational spaces, but also liberate and empower those struggling with their own Blackness in the sea of Whiteness.

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ARE (WE) GOING DEEP ENOUGH?
A NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW ADDRESSING CRITICAL RACE
THEORY, RACIAL SPACE THEORY, AND BLACK IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT

Rhetorical questions: How Black is too Black? Is there a such thing as not Black enough? What about Blackish? Is there really a Black card? Country bumpkin Black or city slick Black? Are all you people see is Black? Why does everything have to be about race? Sell out! All you people look alike. There are levels to my Blackness. How can you be Black and not like people who look like you? Why is it that being around too many Black people makes you feel uncomfortable? Slavery was complicated...so are its ramifications.

Helms (1984) discussed the complexity of racial identity research, the challenge it presents to the researcher, and referenced issues pertaining to theoretical formulation, reliability, environmental influences, and the research participants. According to Helms, Black identity development is influenced by environmental factors such as discrimination and racism. Helms (1990) chronologized the events that influenced the racial identity of Black Americans into four eras: the implementation of slavery; the institutionalization of slavery; the past slavery experience (1895-1975); and the aftermath of the Black consciousness movement of the 1960s (p. 9). Additionally, family, peers, and local communities/environments can influence racial identity.

To unpack the classification of environmental influences of racial identity development, Helms (1990b) cited the following: (a) any individual can be potentially influenced by members of his/her own racial group as well as other groups with whom he or she comes in contact; (b) social environments are a result, at least in part, of the racial identity characteristics of the people in the environment; (c) individuals exist in many

environments, not all of which are equally potent on racial identity development; and (d) environments like individuals are changeable (p. 9-32). From Freud to Erikson to Helms and Cross, researchers have attempted to isolate identity development and compare it to levels of student mastery, Black students attending predominately White institutions, and what creates a “healthy identity or personality” (Erikson, 1959, p. 51). Although I am interested in identity development, I am most interested in Black identity development and how it intersects with space and place through a critical race theory lens. Through a narrative review of the literature, I sought to answer the following question:

- How have researchers addressed the intersectionality of Black identity development with space and place through a critical race theory lens?

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has become an increasingly permanent fixture in the toolkit of education researchers seeking to critically examine educational opportunities, school climate, representation, and pedagogy. CRT is a form of race-based oppositional scholarship (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Brayboy, 2005; Calmore, 1992; Liu, 2009; Love, 2004) and challenges Eurocentric values, such as White being normalized in the United States. CRT research can be traced back to the Critical Legal Studies movement, which gave rise to CRT (Crenshaw, 2011; Tate, 1997). In the 1980s a noted group of legal scholars, including Derrick A. Bell, Jr., Charles Lawrence, Richard Delgado, Lani Guinier, and Kimberle’ Crenshaw, questioned the role of law in maintaining and further constructing racially based social and economic oppression (Lynn & Adams, 2002; Taylor, 1998, 2009). These early critical race scholars sought to challenge prevailing

racial injustices while committing themselves to interrogating racism's continued presence in U.S. jurisprudence and stalled advancement of civil rights legislation (Manning & Muñoz, 2011; Stanley, 2006; Yosso, 2002). Contemporary critical legal scholarship, therefore, builds upon an already robust literature base (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In education, critical scholars have often looked to CRT's foundational legal scholarship, ethnic studies, and the pioneering work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Solorzano (1998), who introduced the study of CRT to K-12 and higher education, respectively. As a theoretical framework, CRT examines the "unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, economic, racial, and gendered lines" (Taylor, 2009, p. 1). It is a movement comprising scholars committed to challenging and disrupting racism and its associated social, legal, political, and educational consequences (Patton, Ranero, & Everett, 2011). As previous critical race academics (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Parker & Lynn, 2002) have observed, the task of applying a CRT framework to educational scholarship is complex and multifaceted.

Key Principles

There are seven tenets of CRT: 1) interest-convergence (Bell, 1992); 2) Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995); 3) counter-storytelling (Delgado, 1989); 4) critique of liberalism (Gotanda, 1991); 5) intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991); 6) racial realism (Bell, 1992); and 7) social change (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Love, 2004). Each tenet provides a deeper examination of the role of CRT in education.

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence occurs when racial equality is achieved to benefit the interests of Whites (Bell, 1995) and underscores racial equality as the byproduct of maintaining the interests of Whites. Relative to White interests, the positioning of racial equality continues to situate people of color as the non-dominant group while Whites are situated as the dominant group. Interest convergence will not occur in instances where racial equality does not benefit the dominant group since racial equality is tied to the desires of the dominant group. In educational settings, interest convergence is achieved when schools and universities believe that inclusive policies and practices will best serve the interests of the established system.

Whiteness as Property

Harris (1993) introduced the term Whiteness as property when she articulated her grandmother's story of passing as White after leaving the Deep South. Her grandmother's story affirmed her belief of Whiteness as prized property. Harris' premise was that the "assumptions, privileges, and benefits" (p. 1713) associated with identifying as White are valuable assets that White people seek to protect.

Experiential Knowledge and Counter-storytelling

The CRT tenet counter-storytelling seeks to give voice to marginalized groups whose stories often go untold (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In the United States, counter-stories chronicle the experiences of people of color against the pervasive dominant narratives constructed by Whites. These stories run counter to the dominant narratives that are told, or taken for granted, by the dominant group about life experiences including the life experiences of people of color. The narratives of the dominant group are used to

frame the message of dominant and non-dominant groups into the message of a single story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Counter-stories depict the ways in which people of color experience social, political, and institutional systems and often differ from dominant group counterparts. In an educational context, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contended authentic voices of Black people through stories are needed to gain useful information about their experiences in these settings. Ladson-Billings (2005) cautioned the use of counter-stories as a standalone tenet of CRT since stories themselves are likely to be misunderstood or misinterpreted without being properly unpacked (Fasching-Varner, 2009), and may unconsciously move scholars not embedded within CRT away from the foundational scholarship (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

Critique of Liberalism

Critique of liberalism challenges the concepts of objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, equal opportunity, and incremental change (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Critique of liberalism challenges the notion of color blindness which fails to consider the permanence of racism. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) suggested that embracing color blindness ignores “that inequity, inopportunity, and oppression are historical artifacts that will not easily be remedied by ignoring race in the contemporary society” (p. 29).

Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1991) introduced intersectionality in her work exploring how Black women experienced oppression based not only on their raced experiences, but also through gendered and classed experiences. Critical race scholars recognize that racial

identity and this form of oppression (racism) intersect with other subordinated identities (such as gender, class, religion, ability/disability, sexual orientation, etc.) and forms of oppression (for example, sexism, homophobia, ableism, etc.) to influence Black people's lived experiences (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Racial realism

Racial realism (Bell, 1995; Parks & Jones, 2008) provides an alternative approach to the quest for equality among marginalized groups. The Civil Rights Movement and other movements for equal rights have historically demanded judicial decisions, programs, services, and treatment equal to what Whites received. Advocates of racial realism (Bell, 1995; Parks & Jones, 2008) call for an understanding, however, that the power dynamic between Whites and other marginalized groups will never result in equality for both groups, as the dominant group will never voluntarily relinquish its superior status. Instead, racial realists call for an understanding of the marginalized groups' subordinate status as a mechanism to challenge oppressive practices and treatment (Bell, 1992, 1995). The acceptance of racial realism as a construct seeks to situate the presence of systemic racism and power dynamics as pervasive and will never be totally eradicated. It is an understanding of racism and power dynamics from this vantage point that provides an opportunity for resistance and social change.

Commitment to Social Justice

Critical race scholars are committed to the establishment of a socially just U. S. society and educational system and maintain a praxis of activism as a component of their scholarship (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005). CRT accounts for race and racism's role in

education and works toward the eradication of racism as part of a larger goal of opposing or eliminating other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexual orientation, language, religion, and national origin (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Application of Critical Race Theory

CRT has evolved into a methodological approach to study complex phenomena involving race, racism, and power in and across disciplines in education (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Critical race theory allows researchers the opportunity to examine the experiences of Black people within educational spaces. This approach is critical since schools work as institutionalized microcosms of the society at large (Sullivan & A'Vant, 2009). CRT provides a way to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways that race and racism covertly and overtly impact the social structures, practices, and discourses that occur within educational setting (Yosso, 2005). CRT insists that researchers take into context the distinctive realities and lived experiences of Black people. Critical race theorists purport that without the voice of Black people contextualizing their daily lived experiences with oppression, a clear and critical understanding of their struggles with race and racism both in and out of the educational system would not be possible (Yull, 2014).

Racial Space Theory

Over the past decade, a growing number of scholars have begun to explore how spatial analysis of racial processes 'teaches us things about race we cannot know by other means' (Knowles, 2003, p. 78). Empirical studies scattered across the disciplinary landscape contribute to what could be considered a growing body of research into the links between race and space (e.g. Anderson, 1995; Feld & Basso, 1996; Pulido, 2000;

Delaney 2002; Razack, 2002; Knowles, 2003; Bullard, 2007; Lipsitz, 2007; Woods & McKittrick, 2007; Nelson, 2008; Bullard & Wright, 2009).

Extending the exploration of the Black experience in school by examining both the impact of race and its various changes over time and space has provided a core basis for the theory of racial space (Neely & Samura, 2011). Neely and Samura's (2011) theory builds on the analysis of CRT by including the lens of space. This work builds on the theoretical underpinnings of Knowles (2003) who suggested, "the social constructions of space illuminates the social constructions of race and vice versa" (p. 78).

Key Principles

Neely and Samura's (2011) theory of racial space outlines four ways that racial and spatial processes intersect: (1) Both race and space are contested; (2) Race and space are fluid and historical; (3) Race and space are interactional and relational; and (4) Race and space are defined by inequality and difference (p. 1938).

Application of Racial Space Theory

Neely and Samura (2011) suggested that examining race and racism within any milieu must be conducted within a sociohistorical context because the way in which race and racism have been defined and experienced by people changes over time and space. Knowles (2003) stated racism is encountered and reworked in place and over time. Embedded in spaces of domination are layers of racialized social histories and experiences, lived and remembered archives that provide the grist for community building, organizing, and action. Neely and Samura (2011) suggested that within any locale the lived experiences of Black people in the U.S. have been influenced by social structures, spatial arrangements, and institutions, which over time change as historical

conditions have changed and disappeared. Spatial perspective on race may provide a useful lens for understanding racism and provide language for explaining its persistence in educational settings.

Racial Identity Development Theory

Racial and ethnic identity are integral parts of the overall framework of both individual and collective identity. Literary and theoretical manifestations of racial identity are discussed not in biological terms (which may imply a racist perspective) but as a social construction, which “refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1993, p. 3). Chávez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) stated for minority populations in the United States, “racial and ethnic identity are manifested by two conflicting social and cultural influences. First, through the cultural traditions and values in which they were born and raised. Second, and in contrast, through negative societal treatment and messaging received from others who do not share that same identity” (p. 39). They stated that the consistent messages that minority populations receive in the U.S. make it clear that people with minority status are less than desirable within mainstream society.

Given the dominant/ subordinate relationship of Whites and Blacks in this society, however, it is not surprising that this developmental process will unfold in different ways (Tatum, 1992). For purposes of this study, Cross and Fhagen-Smith’s (1971, 1978) model of Black identity development is described. It is assumed that a positive sense of one’s self as a member of one’s group (which is not based on any assumed superiority) is important for psychological health (Tatum, 1992). According to Cross and Fhagen-Smith’s (1971, 1978, 1991) model of Black racial identity development, there are five

stages in the process, identified as Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment.

Key Principles

In the first stage of Pre-encounter, the African American has absorbed many of the beliefs and values of the dominant White culture, including the notion that "White is right" and "Black is wrong". Though the internalization of negative Black stereotypes may be outside of his or her conscious awareness, the individual seeks to assimilate and be accepted by Whites, and actively or passively distances him/herself from other Blacks. To maintain psychological comfort at this stage of development, Helms (1990) wrote that:

The person must maintain the fiction that race, and racial indoctrination have nothing to do with how he or she lives life. It is probably the case that the Pre-encounter person is bombarded on a regular basis with information that he or she cannot really be a member of the 'in racial group but relies on denial to selectively screen such information from awareness (p. 23).

Movement into the Encounter phase is typically precipitated by an event or series of events that force the individual to acknowledge the impact of racism in one's life. When faced with the reality that he or she cannot truly be White, the individual is forced to focus on his or her identity as a member of a group targeted by racism. The Immersion/Emersion stage is characterized by the simultaneous desire to surround oneself with visible symbols of one's racial identity and an active avoidance of symbols of Whiteness. As Parham (1989) described, "At this stage, everything of value in life must be Black or relevant to Blackness. This stage is also characterized by a tendency to denigrate white people, simultaneously glorifying Black people... " (p. 190). As individuals enter the Immersion stage, they actively seek out opportunities to explore

aspects of their own history and culture with the support of peers from their own racial background. Typically, White-focused anger dissipates during this phase because so much of the person's energy is directed toward his or her own group- and self-exploration. The result of this exploration is an emerging security in a newly defined and affirmed sense of self. The emergence from this stage marks the beginning of Internalization. Secure in one's own sense of racial identity, there is less need to assert the "Blacker than thou" attitude often characteristic of the Immersion stage (Parham, 1989). In general, "pro-Black attitudes become more expansive, open, and less defensive" (Cross, 1971, p. 24). While still maintaining connections with Black peers, the internalized individual is willing to establish meaningful relationships with Whites who acknowledge and are respectful of his or her self-definition. The individual is also ready to build coalitions with members of other oppressed groups. Cross (1991) suggested that there are few psychological differences between the fourth stage, Internalization, and the fifth stage, Internalization-Commitment. Those at the fifth stage, however, have found ways to translate their "personal sense of Blackness into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment" to the concerns of Blacks as a group, which is sustained over time (Cross, 1991, p. 220). Whether at the fourth or fifth stage, the process of Internalization allows the individual, anchored in a positive sense of racial identity, to both proactively perceive and transcend race. Blackness becomes "the point of departure for discovering the universe of ideas, cultures and experiences beyond Blackness in place of mistaking Blackness as the universe itself" (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991, p. 330).

Application of Black Identity Development Theory

Cross (1991) commented that researchers studying Black identity development seek “to clarify and expand the discourse on Blackness by paying attention to the variability and diversity of Blackness” (p. 223). Cross and other identity development theorists have developed useful tools for researchers examining Black identity development theory in hopes of measuring stages of identity and social attitude development. Tatum (1992) stated that although the process of racial identity development is often presented in linear form, it is probably more accurate to think of it in a spiral form. Often a person may move from one stage to the next, only to revisit an earlier stage as the result of new encounter experiences (Parham, 1989), though the later experience of the stage may be different from the original experience. The image that students often find helpful in understanding this concept of recycling through the stages is that of a spiral staircase. As a person ascends a spiral staircase, she may stop and look down at a spot below. When she reaches the next level, she may look down and see the same spot, but the vantage point has changed (Tatum, 1992).

Method

According to Petticrew and Roberts (2008), a narrative literature review, “refers to a systematic review that synthesizes the individual studies...systematically extracting, checking, and narratively summarizing information on their methods and results” (p. 39). The narrative literature review serves as a comprehensive yet critical and objective analysis of a topic and the discussion and current knowledge that embodies it. Narrative literature reviews are an essential part of the research process and help to establish a theoretical framework for your research. By reviewing the literature, patterns, and trends

in the literature will evolve allowing researchers to identify gaps or inconsistencies in a body of knowledge. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016, p. 24-25) defined theoretical literature review as a narrative literature review that examines how theory shapes or frames research.

Data Collection

Selection of articles. Based on the multiple parameters that framed this study, the following criteria was used to select articles for this review:

- Study content included a focus on the combined theories of critical race, Black identity development, racial space theory, and intersectionality. Rural space and urban space were added to see what literature existed that would also encompass these search criteria. Intersectionality was removed from the search criteria to see what articles that produced.
- Studies included peer reviewed articles, non-peer reviewed articles, and dissertations. Dissertations were considered because of the complexity and intersectionality of the researched theories.
- Studies in the last 20 years were considered due to the limited literature that was found, but only studies in the last 10 years were used for this review.

All of the databases in EBSCOhost were used to search for articles and dissertations that met the above-mentioned criteria. Using the Boolean indicator “and”, the following search terms were entered into databases: *critical race theory*, *Black identity development*, and *racial space theory*. Later *rural education* and *intersectionality* were added to see how many articles would meet the selected criteria. The Boolean indicator “not” was applied for isolating articles that focused on *higher education* and

predominately White institutions. The term *intersectionality* was later removed due to “no results found”.

Initial search results yielded 18 results. After a careful review of the 18 articles, the results yielded no articles that fully mirrored what I sought to research. I found helpful information in general about my research topics and was able to include 13 of the 18 articles for this literature review.

Data Analysis

Based on the work of Jones et al. (2006), constant comparative analysis engages the researcher in a process of collecting and analyzing the data simultaneously at “all stages of the data collection and interpretation process, and results in the identification of codes” (p. 44). Open coding was used to identify concepts and categories. This process solidified and clustered the data into major themes that were presented in the research findings. Codes were based on the tenets of CRT, Black identity development stages, identity development characteristics, race, and place/space. Each article was graphed and coded accordingly and the themed for inclusion or exclusion in this review. If authors used counter-stories to operationalize the tenets of CRT, this strategy was coded as well.

Table 1. Themes

| | % | n |
|------------------------------------|----|---|
| <u>Critical Race Theory Tenets</u> | | |
| Racial realism | 53 | 7 |
| Counternarratives | 38 | 5 |
| Intersectionality | 30 | 4 |
| Whiteness as property | 53 | 7 |
| Commitment to social justice | 23 | 3 |
| Microaggressions | 23 | 3 |
| <u>Identity Development themes</u> | | |
| Isolation/invisibility | 23 | 3 |
| Double consciousness/positionality | 23 | 3 |
| (table cont'd.) | | |

| | % | n |
|---|----|----|
| Struggle with Blackness (insider and/or outsider) | 30 | 4 |
| Navigating spaces | 61 | 8 |
| Lived experiences/own voices | 85 | 11 |
| <u>Racial Space themes</u> | | |
| Urban | 15 | 2 |
| Predominately White | 23 | 3 |
| Historically Black | 8 | 1 |
| Equitable/humanizing learning spaces | 62 | 8 |

Note. Thirteen total articles

Findings

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory was the framework in all of the studies. Of the seven tenets of CRT, the articles utilized five; racial realism and Whiteness as property were the tenets most discussed. The theme of racism was presented in seven of the articles as a permanent fixture in American society (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Racism has become so normalized that it is nearly unrecognizable, especially by those who benefit from it (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). As highlighted in the research articles, those who are regularly impacted by racism are aware of its debilitating effects because of personal experiences (Taylor et al., 2009). Bell (1995) argued that the understanding of racism as a permanent position “frees us to imagine and implement racial strategies that can bring fulfillment and triumph” (p. 306).

Counternarratives were included in five of the studies as an effective way to share the lived experiences of the participants. The counterstories of marginalized groups and the recognition of racism as an inherent part of society can help facilitate change, which in turn will improve the experiences of people of Color (Matsuda, 1995; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Microaggressions is not a tenet of CRT, but a result of

racism was specifically mentioned in three articles. Solórzano et al., (2000) wrote that microaggressions are unconscious, shocking, and subtle forms of racism. While it is argued that racial realism no longer exists in the post-Obama era, the Trump America upswing is a backlash of the era that preceded it. Microaggressions and resulting racial battle fatigue support the belief that racial realism is still relevant (Hurtado, 1992; Steele, 1997; Clark, Fasching-Varner, & Brimhall-Vargas, 2012).

Intersectionality was a targeted inclusion in four articles as the authors argued that race, sex, and class were integral components of their studies and could not be separated and studied in isolation. Kumasi (2011) defined intersectionality as “the belief that individuals often have overlapping interests and traits based not only on their racial identity but also their class position, gender, and so forth” (pp. 216-217). Kumasi also indicated that critical race scholars are critical of any analysis that focuses solely on race and fails to consider other marginalized and oppressed identities.

Whiteness as property assigns a property value to being White, which has implications for underrepresented populations navigating spaces created for the dominant group (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) as seen by its inclusion in 7 of the 13 articles. Whiteness as a concept is based on power relations (Harris, 1993). Ladson-Billings (1998) positioned critical race theory as an important intellectual and social tool for “deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (p. 9).

Critical race scholars are committed to the establishment of a socially just society. This commitment to social justice was articulated in three articles. The three studies

spoke of using their findings to examine and reimagine other possibilities that would have a positive impact on future practices. CRT accounts for race and racism's role in education and works toward the eradication of racism part of a larger goal of opposing other forms of subordination (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race scholars work toward the elimination of racism and the empowerment of groups that are oppressed and marginalized (Jones et al., 2014).

Identity Development Themes

Identity development was a reoccurring theme in all 13 articles. Eleven articles captured the participants' voices and lived experiences in their research methods through interviews, surveys, and classes (safe spaces). Feelings of isolation or invisibility were discussed in three articles and three other articles discussed their double consciousness or positionality of their role. The participants were aware of their identity as it related to the position they were in at the time of the study. In four articles, participants spoke directly to their struggle with Blackness both as an insider with other Blacks or as an outsider in groups with Whites. Eight of the 13 articles alluded to "spaces" in the form of navigating them, creating them, or dismantling their current form.

Racial Space Themes

Racial space themes as discussed by many researchers like Neely & Samura (2011) and Knowles (2003) were non-existent in the 13 articles. There was no intersectionality in terms of viewing racial identity development with race/space or even place. In two articles the researcher discussed that the study was focused in an urban space, three articles focused on predominately White institutional spaces, and one study was centered on a historically Black college/university space. Racial space theory was

developed by Neely and Samura (2011) and built on the analysis of CRT by including the lens of space. Eight of the 13 articles discussed the importance of equitable/ humanizing learning spaces for people of Color to grow, learn, and develop. While I did not find what I was looking for in the research, that is a reason for me to continue my research and explore this area of intersectionality.

Discussion and Implications

The research shows multiples connections to race, student achievement, and space; however, limited research has examined all the factors from an intersectionality viewpoint and tie it into the development of one's identity development. Current examinations of the Black educational experience are undermined by the suggestions of a post-racial society and the discourse of colorblindness (Neville & Awad, 2014). CRT, social identity development, and racial identity development were common themes and discussions across the literature that was reviewed, but none of the articles addressed the intersectionality of these themes in relation to space/place. In the literature review, I utilized qualitative methodological approaches of counter-storytelling, interviews, surveys, and a few correlational studies. Based on the limitations of the literature, more work needs to be done in applying research in more holistic ways that would encompass a person's whole experience and not a section of it.

The study of a person's identity development poses a possible limitation to some forms of studying identity development, as Helms (1990b) stated identity development takes time. Addressing systematic inequalities and inequities as they relate to race can be exhausting and frustrating if they fail at inspiring systematic reform, posing another threat to pursuing research that is framed by CRT but intersects with racial identity

development and racial space theory. My research builds upon the isolated and disjointed studies that currently exist and that fail to look at the intersectionality of educational space, place, and experience and how that relates to a person's identity development. Cross (1991) summed up my logic and research when he stated that theorists and researchers on Nigrescence seek "to clarify and expand the discourse of Blackness by paying attention to the variability and diversity of Blackness" (p. 223). While literature exists isolating variables like predominately White institution versus historically Black college and universities, higher education specific studies, code-meshing or code switching, and White space/Black places, the variables that are captured in that literature are snapshots in a larger picture. I propose that more comparative studies look at this intersectionality, as well as more generational and intergenerational studies. To fully and critically examine the effects of race on Black people in the U.S., going forward my research will apply all of the above theories in this literature review to give other researchers and readers the 4-D experience of educational research. Research needs more voices, more faces, more experiences, and more stories to capture, reach, and teach others to inspire systematic reform. My research going forward will be framed as critically race-spaced identity theory. Intersecting the theories would still allow critical race scholars to challenge racism empirically (as a central axis of oppression in daily reality), personally (as a vital component in how CRT scholars view themselves and their experiences of the world), and politically (as a point of group coherence and activism). Critically race-spaced identity theory would encompass the full experience, the then and now, to better understand and explain the how and why of Black actions, thoughts, and mindset.

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THE FLY IN THE BOWL OF BUTTERMILK

Imagine that! Huh, having a voice for the voiceless. Having a spine for the spineless. Having a clue for the clueless. Why am I always the one who has to speak up? What is this fire, this flame, that shines so brightly? The type of flame that mesmerizes and captures your attention; yet still the kind that burns. I never thought of my light as fire, but now I can see. My grandmother used to always sing to me, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine." Little did I know she saw my light and prophesized its eternal flame into existence. Whether I was "worrying the horns off a Billy goat" or doing what Kala's gonna do, I did it because of the light. That fire that burns inside of me that could not or will not ignore or accept the status quo around me. "I may play your game, but I'm not your pawn," said the fly in the bowl of buttermilk. Imagine that...

--Kala Burrell-Craft
"Let It Shine"

Introduction

The Black educational spaces that I have created, joined, and navigated have been essential for my soul, my sanity, and my development. I have a double consciousness that transcends understanding for some people, like Du Bois (1903):

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others...One ever feels his twoness- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. 45).

As a light-skinned Black intellectual woman who was raised by college educated Black parents, I have a dual identity developed for membership in a group of educated whites. But because of my Blackness, I am also excluded from that same group. This group

invites you to the party because you can afford the seats at the table, but then blocks you once they sense you trying to buy the restaurant. This double consciousness is nothing new as we Blacks have had to create and navigate this space all of their lives here in the U.S.

Collins (1998) coined the term “outsider-within” as she described Black womanist scholars’ tethering between Black/white educational spaces. Outsiders-within are able to gain access to the knowledge of a group in which they will be allowed access (within), but the power structure within the group will remain unequal (outsider). As outsiders-within, Black women have a distinct understanding of the paradoxes between the dominant group’s actions and philosophies (Baxley, 2012). “Finding space within these borders where self-actualization can be discovered is the nucleus from which Black women can derive the power to contest their marginal location... and to continuously renegotiate their elusive culture and identity to meet expectations in a white-dominated world” (Alfred, 2001, p. 114).

As a Black intellectual woman, my outsider-within status enriches my capacity to appreciate and to relate to other Black women and their narratives, while understanding and navigating the power dynamics of the dominant power structure. Here, in this space, is a constant demand for me to push the Black agenda, the feminist agenda, and the family agenda. Many are unaware that Black women must push the agenda to be seen and heard in this world in general. Black women have to morph and evolve to be all things to all people, but often are misunderstood and/or ignored resulting in unsurmountable stress that can lead to racial battle fatigue. Paraphrasing Smith, Allen and Danley (2007), Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) is the anxiety experienced by racially underrepresented groups as

well as those engaged in race work with a focus on the physical and psychological toll taken by constant and unceasing discrimination, microaggressions, and stereotype threat (Fasching-Varner, Albert, Mitchell, & Allen, 2015). RBF explains the anxiety and anger that wells up inside of me on a daily basis as I watch and listen to new reports of Black males being hunted and killed. It is the nauseous feeling I get when I witness white privilege and blatant Black disrespect in the same similar encounter. It is the churning of my stomach when I visit my place of small-town and see that relatively nothing is changing. There are still few to no Black teachers in the local schools; in fact, there are less than 10 Black education professionals in my home entire parish of 10,981 people (City-Data, 2018). There are still few to no Blacks in leadership roles in the town and I struggle to think of any Black businesses besides a carwash or in-house hair salon. RBF is the “I - We, have something to prove” attitude that overwhelms me whenever my kids have projects to do in school; all projects must be centered on highlighting Black excellence. “Your classmates and your teachers are gonna learn something today,” I would say to myself and my kids as I lay out for them how this project is going to flow. RBF is the performance I have to showcase in the presence of my white counterparts to show them I am Black, educated, and a force to be reckoned with. In reflecting upon my outsider-within experiences, I have come to understand my thirst to push the race agenda forward. Race has played a central role in my perception of life since I can remember; therefore, it has shaped my identity development and has lead me to this point in time, a time where I am purposefully and critically examining the role and impact race has on my life as the “fly in the bowl of buttermilk”.

In reflecting on my outsider self, being forced to navigate and create spaces that do not confine and compartmentalize me has been an integral part of my educational journey. Blackwell (1981) designated the term “compartmentalization” to describe Blacks’ separation of the two cultures in which they exist daily. My double consciousness began around the age of five in a small, rural town in Louisiana. In this small-town of approximately 2,128 residents in 1990, and where I graduated high school in 1992, there were and are dirt roads and farmland with livestock that cover a total area of 1.7 miles (City-Data, 2018). The demographics have consistently reflected approximately a 65.8% white and 29.2% Black population split (City-Data, 2018). Walmart remains the staple, Sonic is still the hangout spot, local shops and grocery stores still survive, and Friday nights are all about football. Since I left home for college, there has been a steady decline in the population. The most recent decline as noted by City-Data (2018) indicated a 21.8% decrease in population change since 2000.

Located in the Northeast corner of Louisiana, east of the Bayou Macon, and roughly over an hour from the nearest shopping mall, lies my Louisiana small-town. Neatly tucked away in close proximity to Arkansas and Mississippi, my parish is home to one of the nation’s most important Native American archeological sites. My small-town appears to be an “All-American” town where Black and white families live together in harmony. Harmony is just a façade, however, for the hidden racism has eaten its way into every fabric of the town’s existence. Delgado (1995) explained that Critical Race Theory (CRT) begins with the notion that racism is “normal, not aberrant, in U.S. society. It is so embedded in our culture that it appears both natural and normal” (p. xiv). Relative to Blackwell’s compartmentalization theory (1981), I consciously struggle with

and try to avoid total assimilation into white culture and constantly choose to challenge the constructs that race places on Black people. This paper seeks to unpack the experiences that I believe have shaped my Blackness growing up in a small, rural town in Louisiana as a light-skinned Black girl from an educated family.

Purpose. Let It Shine

Through my auto/ethnographic narrative, I welcome you, the reader, to become both an observer and a participant in my life and educational journey, a journey that continues to shape my identity development and the choices I make in life. This narrative journey begins as my own, but with your thoughts it transcends into a voice and action that becomes *ours*, to make sense of, shape of, and to change future narratives. My double consciousness and outsider-within status allows me the opportunity to critically (re)situate myself within my experience, (re)create the narrative that will be shared with others in hopes of (re)shaping future narratives of Black people dwelling in rural places like my small-town. I want to initiate a conversation about what it looks like and feels like to walk through my experience as an outsider-within. As Goodall (1996) noted “the authority of an ethnographic text is not in the details of revealing the method but instead in the method of revealing the details” (p.17).

Method. The Bowl: Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, Autoethnography, and Racial Identity Development

Traditionally, educational theories ignore or silence historically marginalized groups by not addressing or responding to their needs from a majority vantage point. CRT, however, helps to recognize and celebrate the unique voice of Black women as *we* continue to define ourselves (by not accepting mainstream images of who we are), and who are active in changing how the world views them and other women of Color who are

rendered invisible in academic discourse (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2005; Collins, 1998; hooks, 1990; Thompson, 1989). Additionally, CRT exposes dominant norms and assumptions that appear neutral, but systematically marginalize, silence, and misrepresent Black people (Ladson-Billings, 2009; McKay, 1997; Vargas, 2003). Traditionally, narratives have not been widely accepted in the qualitative methodological canon, but they are an essential component in CRT (Baxley, 2012). As a kind of narrative, autoethnography allows me to share my narrative as an outsider-within and tell my story with the intent that one day it will be accepted into the methodological cannon as a valuable and valid form of research.

Intersectionality theory offers a method of investigating how gender intersects with other identity factors to influence how women experience oppression. Intersectionality is grounded in the idea that people live layered lives and often experience overlap, making it possible to feel oppressed in one area and privileged in another. Using the work of the Combahee River Collective (1982), Davis (1983), and Lorde (2007, 1984), Crenshaw (1991) applied and developed intersectionality theory; Crenshaw stated that “the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women’s lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately” (p. 1244).

Connecting CRT, intersectionality, and autoethnography allows me to present my story through a narrative. I use my narrative as a research tool to uncover, examine, challenge, and make sense of the whitestream practices that exist in my experiences and to “highlight discrimination, offer racial different interpretations of policy, and challenge the universality of assumptions made about people of color” (Harper et al., 2009, p. 391).

As I share my experiences as I weave them in and out of the phases of Black identity development. Racial and ethnic identity are critical parts of the overall framework of individual and collective identity. For non-white populations in the U.S., racial and ethnic identity are manifested by two conflicting social and cultural influences: First, this occurs through the cultural traditions and values in which they are born and raised; Second, and in contrast, this happens through negative societal treatment and messaging received from others who do not share the same identity. These messages make it clear that people with minority status are less desirable within mainstream society. For white U.S. citizens, ethnicity is usually invisible and unconscious because societal norms have been constructed around them (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). The invisibility of whiteness serves as a research barrier, as whiteness is often considered the “default”, unexamined racial category (Hyde, 1995; McIntosh 2003), marking its higher status on the ladder of social hierarchy (Rosaldo, 1989). McIntosh (2003) argued that even those whites who recognize the disadvantages of racism for people of color are often taught to ignore the implications of white privilege.

Cross (1971, 1978, 1996) and Fhagen-Smith’s (1996) model of Black identity development was woven through my narrative. Black identity development, also referred to by Cross (1971) as Nigrescence and which I use interchangeably throughout this text, refers to the process of becoming Black and the five stages of Black identity and consciousness for Blacks living in the U.S. The stages are: Pre-encounter (Stage 1) which depicts the identity to be changed; Encounter (Stage 2) which isolates the point at which the person feels compelled to change; Immersion-Emersion (Stage 3) which describes the vortex of identity change; and Internalization and Internalization-Commitment (Stages 4

and 5) which describe the habituation and internalization of the new identity (Cross, 1991, p. 256).

The Fly

Racism significantly impacts racial identity development in the U.S. Adams (2005) stated, “Race is the sharpest and deepest division in American life, and because of the longstanding divide, achieving equal access to and benefits from institutions of higher education has been an ongoing struggle for people of color in general, but particularly for African Americans” (p. 285). This divide has affected the educational journey of Blacks in the U.S. since Blacks were granted access to the educational system, thus shaping their identity development and impacting future generations. I now invite you into my Blackness ... my history, my development, and my limitations. Walk with me as I weave in and out of my experiences of growing up in a rural town in Louisiana. As we walk, I share my outsider-within experiences so that you, the reader, can identify with how my experiences with Black spaces have shaped my identity using Cross (1971, 1978, 1996) and Fhagen-Smith’s (1996) model of Black identity development.

Stage 1: Pre-encounter. Persons in the pre-encounter stage hold attitudes that range from low salience to race neutrality to anti-Black (Cross, 1991). In this stage people do not acknowledge race as something that has affected their lives thus far. Cross (1991) wrote, “persons have frequently been socialized to favor a Eurocentric cultural perspective” (p. 193).

Growing up in a rural town I saw everything in Black and white but at the same time, I did not really understand what I was seeing as a child. I remember seeing the shades of my family and white. I think in my mind I thought of color the same as the

colors in the crayon box...many shades and no two shades the same. My parents held professional jobs as teachers at a predominately White school. I had two dark-skinned grandfathers. I referred to my maternal grandfather as Bay or Blackie. He was the color of chocolate cake and a college educated teacher who overcame a series of events in his life as a Black man with a physical disability; his story is chronicled in a book titled *Vaulting Over Destiny: A Story of Favor, Faith, and Determination* (2017). You would never know that my paternal grandfather, to whom I refer as Granddaddy (coffee, no cream color), was not college educated. He was the owner and operator of his own school bus, a community member, and a successful farmer with his own land. There even is a road named after him- Burrell Road. My maternal grandmother, (the color of vanilla cream) to whom I refer as NeNe, my aunt, and my uncle worked as social workers at the local Department of Social Services. My paternal grandmother (color of butter pound cake) was a true caregiver. She took care of everyone around her, even kids and families to whom she was not related.

A few of my uncles worked as farmers on their own land and everyone else lived elsewhere in near and far cities; for the record, I come from an enormous family. My dad is the oldest of fourteen siblings and my mom is the oldest female of eleven siblings. I have aunts, uncles, and cousins for days and we all come in different shades of chocolate, everything from white chocolate, to mocha, milk, and dark. I lived my life in color and that is all I knew.

Most of my family was college educated or heavily emphasized education, so school always played a central role in my life. Whether I was visiting my parent's school, playing school, or attending school, the educational space always existed. It was through

this space that I think I began to develop my own thoughts and perceptions towards race. I did not “see” race at home, but I could see and hear it in the educational spaces my parents carefully navigated on a daily basis. I could see that the school in the small-town where we lived was the most diverse school in the parish with three Black k-12th grade teachers and maybe five Black students in every class. The school where my parents worked also had three Black teachers (my mom, dad, and the librarian), but may have had one Black student in each grade. The year I attended sixth grade at my parent’s school, there were actually three Black students in my class including me; the other two students had been retained one or more years and we all just happened to be in the same class that year. I heard my parents speak of race when they were passed over for promotions for which they were more than qualified. In a few cases some of the students they taught were appointed to positions over them.

My parents received their bachelor’s degrees from a historically Black college/university (HBCU), and by the time I was in elementary school both had master’s degrees from a predominately White institution (PWI). In their own ways, they both successfully navigated and somewhat mastered the outsider-within space and I think I learned how to navigate my space by watching them. Both of my parents loved their HBCU but never really talked about the PWI they attended. I could see their love for Blackness by the actions they took in the community. They helped other students in elementary, secondary, and college with their school work, they volunteered as leaders in the Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts in which my brother and I were members. My dad helped Black farmers in the community fill out various forms of paperwork and to fight matters of discrimination in the local system and community. They both always gave

back to the Black community in their own way. I think their love for representation of Blackness is part of the reason I never had a white doll. I remember my mom went to great lengths to find beautiful Black dolls when I was growing up. I remember my grandfather, my Granddaddy, giving me a white doll one time. I looked up at every bit of my 6'8" Granddaddy, then I looked at my dad whose hand I was holding, and then looked back at Granddaddy and said, "I don't like those kinds of dolls." Even though I still did not "see" race, I knew that white was not necessarily right for me. From that moment forward, Granddaddy never offered me another doll...period, which was totally fine with me since he always told his granddaughters we were more beautiful than any doll that could be created. He would sing as he strummed his guitar, "I got the prettiest girls in the town they'll make a jack rabbit hug a hound. They so pretty...they so pretty to me." I may not have had a true concept of race at this pre-encounter stage, but my foundation was being built on family, love, and self-love that I was beautiful just the way God made me. My dad, grandfathers, and uncles made sure we girls never lost sight of that in all the stages of our lives and continue to do so even now.

Stage 2: Encounter. People in the encounter stage must work around, slip through, or even shatter the relevance of their ideology and worldview (Ritchey, 2014). Cross (1991) pointed out the encounter "need not be negative" (p. 197) for the event to have impact and steer a person toward Nigrescence. What matters is that the encounter has a personally significant impact to be the catalyst for change in their thinking.

I loved playing dress up, role-playing, and dolls; it was during this stage of development that I have my first memory of race as a social construct (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Morrison, 1992). As I mentioned, my family represented the colors in a crayon box

– many shades and no two shades the same – so I do not recall recognizing “whiteness as a racial discourse” (Gillborn, 1990; Leonardo, 2002, p. 31) based on skin color until I was about seven years old, which would have been around 1981. Some cousins from the city came to visit every year and one particular year, they brought Barbie dolls with them. I do not remember ever seeing a Barbie doll prior to this experience because all of my friend’s dolls were Black; my parents’ college educated friends also purchased Black dolls for their daughters. I remember asking my cousins, “Why y’all play with these dolls? She don’t even walk or pee”, but she did have hair to play with and a lot of accessories. That was the first time I remember thinking about representation of races as they related to dolls. My cousins brought these dolls to visit every year for a few years straight. At the first visit Barbie did not have any Black friends, but by the next visit, she had one Black friend in her entourage. The only thing I remember thinking was, “Thank God for accessories because Barbie was whack.” My cousins had Black dolls, but they traveled with Barbie. I surmised that maybe it was because Barbie was smaller and did take a lot of room up in the car on their nine-hour drive from the city.

Shortly after Barbie entered my life, Cabbage Patch kids made their debut. My mom went to great lengths to find me a Black Cabbage Patch kid before she would spend her money on it. That particular experience was instrumental in changing the way I saw things as they related to color. I remember paying closer attention to dolls and other toys when I went to Howard Brothers, the store replaced by Walmart, or the toy store. I also remember trying to find crayons that came close to the shade of my skin. I remember sitting in my second-grade classroom coloring the people with the brown crayon, but they still looked too dark. To compensate, I took the edge of a pair of scissors and carefully

scrapped over the colored paper, which resulted in a smoother, even colored shade of mocha that better suited my personal reflection of skin color. Even though the 64 box of crayons was out at the time, the big box with the sharper built in the back, the teachers would not allow us to bring that to class until we were in the third grade. Boy, did that 64-color box make it easier for me to live life in color as I transitioned to the next stage in my Black identity development.

Stage 3: Immersion-Emersion. The immersion-emersion stage of Nigrescence addresses the most sensational aspect of Black identity development, for it represents the vortex of psychological Nigrescence (Cross, 1991). According to Cross, during this stage Black people begin to shed their Eurocentric cultural perspective and construct a new frame of reference with the information they have acquired about race. Cross (1991) wrote that “immersion is a strong, powerful dominating sensation that is constantly energized by rage [at white people and culture], guilt [at having once been tricked into thinking Black ideas] and developing a sense of pride [in one’s Black self, Black people, and Black culture]” (p. 205).

I absolutely loved the late 80s and early 90s. Several family members and friends of the family were in college during this time and I visited them frequently. While a few of them attended PWI’s, the majority attended HBCU’s in the state. I had a closet full of Black Pride t-shirts. I was the little Black Panther, a social justice advocate of my school and parish. I rebelled against the oppressive systems in place in my school and parish by any and “all means necessary” (Malcolm X, 1992). My school administration suspended Black students daily for wearing the HBCU and Black Pride shirts that circulated during that time. I had almost every t-shirt: “Black by Demand”, “My Black is Beautiful”, “The

Blacker the College, the Sweeter the Knowledge”, to name a few. Every day the principal talked to me about wearing my shirts and causing much commotion and every day I expressed to him how I felt and what I thought. He would threaten suspension, but I told him until he showed me in the school handbook how my shirts were not aligned with the dress code policy, I would keep wearing my shirts to school. In spite of this, he still had power, but he did not have power over me. He sent other Black students home for wearing their shirts and they complied. I urged them to stand up and fight back, but they did not. In reflecting, this was the first time I used my outsider-within status to stand up for something larger than myself. Because of my family’s position within the community, I was in a unique position to navigate both spaces to my advantage.

I fell in love with books all over again during this period of uprising. I read Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Langston Hughes, Eldridge Cleaver, Amiri Baraka, Zora Neale Hurston, and W. E. B. Du Bois among others. I listened to recordings of Minister Farrakhan, and I loved the poetry and literature that was produced during the “New Negro” movement of the 1920’s, so much so that I named my son Langston and my daughter Zora. I rode around the town pulling down and tearing up every David Duke for Governor sign I saw posted during this time. I felt really passionate about my need for resisting, but at the same time I had to co-exist with my Black and white friends who did not quite understand me because I lived between worlds. My honey-toned skin and my family’s socio-economic status had white friends saying I wasn’t really Black and that I was one of them. I assumed in their minds that since I had access to vehicles, designer clothes, and invites to the homes of my white peers to which no other Black students could go, I was perceived as different, as more like them than like the other Black kids. I

had Black friends saying I was too Black because of how vocal I was about representing my Blackness or I was accused of acting white because of my ability to navigate white spaces (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It was during this time that I was introduced to “colorism” and I became aware of the differences between how Blacks of lighter skin tone were treated differently from Blacks with a darker skin tone.

I have always needed to challenge the social structures around me; maybe it is directly related to the things I could see and hear in my small-town growing up. In my mind, I had a very clear understanding of who I thought I was during this stage of development.

In my James Brown voice, “Say it loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud”. Oh, how I enjoyed my adolescent years! They were adrenaline filled and so empowering. My grandmother’s brother, who lived in Africa, was aging by this time and came to visit more frequently than he had done in the past. I loved to listen to his stories about Africa and its people (*our* people). He told us how America wanted to keep Africa from Black people and how the media perpetrated this by their use of negative images. He shared his experiences as an outsider when he first arrived in Africa and how he was called a white man. This reminded me of Dr. Dillard’s story *Learning to (re)member the things we’ve learned to forget: Endarkened feminisms, spirituality, and the sacred nature of research and teaching* (2012), and how she was referred to as a white woman during her first marketplace experience in Ghana. This also reminded me of other family stories like the one of my NeNe’s uncle who lived in Canada most of his adult life. He was a very fair-skinned (white chocolate mocha colored with freckles) railroad porter who met a Canadian woman on one of his trips up North and fell in love. He chose to live his life in

Canada with his wife and her family where his color was acceptable, and he could live life without prejudice, even though he could pass as white. He annually travelled South to visit the family and on one trip he bought his wife; they were not allowed to go anywhere together in the town for fear of racial backlash. These stories were a few of many about the neighboring town of Terry where my maternal grandmother NeNe was raised, and her ancestors owned a large majority of the land. I love the stories my family told about the necessity and their ability to navigate spaces and places. They were and are narratives of empowerment and survival that they thought had to be experienced and explored in their own way. Those stories inspired me, my family motivated me, and my experiences in the late 80's and early 90's peaked my interest even more to explore my Blackness fully. I knew then that this was not a phase for me. This was my life. This would be my identity... "Black by Nature, Proud by Choice."

Stage 4: Internalization. Internalization encompasses a transition period where one is working through the challenges and problems of a new identity (Cross, 1991). Cross's theory suggests people move away from how others view them to how they view themselves during this time. Internalization occurs when a person realizes that there are negative qualities among their own people and that all white people are not the enemy. The person sees racism and sexism as social constructs that can be fought against and begins to think more critically about their racial identity and how it has shaped their life (Racial equity tools, 2011). They become secure in their own sense of racial identity and Pro-Black attitudes become more expansive, open, and less defensive (Cross, 1991). "Black identity functions to fulfill the self-protection, social anchorage, and bridging needs of the individual" (p. 220).

At this stage of my life, I knew I wanted to go to a HBCU. I wanted a space that looked like me, felt like me, and thought like me. I loved the energy, excitement, and the Blackness of being in the space of a HBCU. I had been overexposed to Grambling and Southern growing up in Louisiana and I knew I wanted to go away to attend college. My choices were Spelman, Dillard, and Fisk. After what I thought was careful decision making, I chose Fisk; after all, W. E. B. Du Bois had attended this institution, as had Nikki Giovanni, James Weldon Johnson, and Ida B. Wells. The friendships that I made while attending Fisk have been deep and long lasting. There was a soulful kindred spirit at Fisk that is unlike any other institution. If open to it, you can hear the sounds of our ancestors and feel their spirit. Fisk's history was so intoxicating that a group of friends and I entered the administration building late one night just to go up an old abandoned elevator shaft to the top floor to witness for ourselves the artifacts and history that was in that space. I participated in many dangerous adventures all in the name of retracing the steps of my forefathers and mothers. I would not trade my experience at Fisk for the world. Even though I graduated with my bachelor's degree from Bowie State University, another HBCU, those experiences, those professors, those friendships, and the educational spaces that were created for me are truly priceless; spaces that PWIs are incapable of imitating.

Stage 5: Internalization-Commitment. Internalization-commitment focuses on the interest of Black affairs over an extended amount of time (Cross, 1991). In this stage, people find ways to translate their personal sense of Blackness into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment to concerns of Blacks as a group, which is sustained over

time. Cross (1991) stated “the internalization marks the point of dissonance resolution and reconstruction of ones’ stead state personality and cognitive style” (pg. 220).

Family, career, school, and work consume me as a middle-aged adult. My priorities and tactics have changed over the years, but not my desire for social change and advocacy. I resist in other ways now that I am older and have a family. I am not as loud, as in your face as I used to be, but I fight on a more strategic level nowadays. I am vocal in discussions regarding race in various platforms, but now I educate rather than attack. I speak up when I see injustices and I address them when power and control are in my favor. I apply my code-switching abilities to navigate in, out, and around white spaces. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018), code switching is the switching from the linguistic system of one language or dialect to that of another. In my role as an educational administrator, I am cognizant of the curriculum choices I make for my students Black and white, and I assure that what my teachers are delivering is culturally relevant and empowering for all students. I work with teachers to examine their racial identity to develop better teaching styles. Fasching-Varner (2013) stated, “We need to figure out who we are and how our experiences shape the world” (Stelly, 2013).

I chose to obtain my Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration because I have successfully navigated spaces that have allowed me to do so. I always believe that I have something to prove to the world and the people around me. I am Black and educated, I am a force to be reckoned with, and I do not accept the status quo. I need to do more work in advocating for change with the people and the spaces around me. I want to be that voice for those whom the educational system failed and that voice for those students who were not supported and had no post-secondary educational opportunities. I will

continue to speak for all of the Black families whose educational spaces have not worked in providing them a safe, supported, equitable experience in which their Black identity could grow and flourish.

The Buttermilk

Racism, poverty, privilege, and politics are interwoven into U.S. society and my little rural town was no exception. I attended school in the town in which we lived and not at the school where my parents worked. The only Black families that had gone to the school where my parents worked were my dad's younger siblings and one or two other families. I am not sure about the other families, but my family owned about 80 acres of land in that area. I mention this because it is for this reason that some of my peers viewed my story as privileged, but I viewed my story as my family having great code-switching and navigation skills.

I remember there was a huge community pool in town when I was growing up. I remember asking my parents why I could not go swimming at the pool in the park. I do not remember what she said, but I know we never went. I can vividly remember the white faces at the pool in the summertime, absent of any and all shades of Black. That is the first time I can recall not being welcome somewhere because of my race. Once Black people in the community began questioning the rules surrounding the pool membership policy, the town closed the pool permanently.

I also remember a baseball park that hosted all white teams. Similar to the pool, it was understood that it was an all-white park. I asked my parents why we did not go to that baseball field and they said that the one near my grandparents was closer to us and

they had no desire for us to play in the other park. Now I know that my parents really meant, “I am not sending my children anywhere they are not welcome.”

School was interesting. I remember in third grade working on a reading program called SRA (not an acronym). The program assigned reading levels that were distinguishable by color. I remember everyone being on different colors, but I also remember wondering why there were white kids in the color ahead of me. I remember being only one of two Blacks in the blue section (both of us teachers’ kids) and the other Black kids several sections behind us. Sassy child that I was, I asked the teacher why I was not in the purple section. I remember so vividly I was in the pretty blue-ish color, but several of my white friends were in the purple. She said she thought I belonged in the blue section and that the purple section was more difficult. I told her I could do whatever they could do. I went home and told my mother what happened that day in school as I usually did and by the next time we had SRA, I was in the purple section. There were many incidents such as this during my school years where I challenged a teacher or administrator about something, went home and had a conversation with my parents, and returned to school the next day or so and the issue had been addressed. At that time, I did not really understand what was going on, but I felt supported enough to question everything that did not make sense to me. This encounter of race and class reminded me of the article in *Presumed Incompetent* where Shields (2012) starts to reflect and realizes how intersectionality and opportunity played a major role in how her life has evolved.

I began recognizing the labels and categories that society placed on people during this stage of my development and how we adapt and continue them. I remember developing a bourgeois attitude as I fluently navigated outsider-within spaces during this

period. I was aware of my family's status in the community and I knew that my Black family was different from many other Black families. I used my socioeconomic status to set myself apart from my peers. I had access to multiple vehicles to drive, I had a checking account, and I had my own telephone line and number for my bedroom. In retrospect, I am ashamed at how I treated my Black brothers and sisters. I aided in the oppression and psychological stripping of their Black identity development. I remember not wanting everyone in town to have access to the same designer clothing as me. This became problematic during my teenager stage since my mother was that parent who always gave back. I did not want my hand-me-downs to be given to poor kids because then they would be dressing like me. It was a confusing time. How could I empower my people and not want them to be my equal at the same time? Reflecting now, I clearly see the contradiction that posed, but I did not see that at that time. I think this contradiction is an explicit example of how privilege intersected with my life. Although I am not white, the environment in which I was raised granted me access to the within group where subconsciously my norm at one time was blindly navigating between the two spaces in a sense of confusion.

Moving away from this rural space to go to college, I never gave overwhelming thought to the social and racial constructs I left behind. I assumed as time went on, things would naturally change and so would the mindsets of people. After all, things appeared more racially inclusive every time I went home to visit my family. More interracial relationships and children were seen, more brown faces were observed working in various businesses in town, and the town had closed the upstairs section of the local theater; I did not realize it was technically still segregated when I frequented the theater

as a child. I only chose to sit upstairs because it had a better view, that is where the cool kids sat, and it was the safest spot to avoid getting popcorn and soda thrown on you. I always felt confident enough, however, to sit wherever I wanted and did not worry myself with constraints. If there was a perceived social constraint inside or outside of the school setting, trust and believe Kala was going to challenge it.

From being called a heifer by a teacher, to challenging a teacher for referencing that Black people know about measuring bales of cotton in math class, to assuring that every project I had to complete in high school was focused on some element of Blackness, to Black students being sent home from school for wearing Black pride shirts while white students were allowed to display rebel flags, Kala was going to address it. When Trump's ideologies and rhetoric caused blatant and open racial issues to (re)surface, Kala was there to challenge it; so much for racial progress. Critical race theorists like Ladson-Billings (1998) believe that racism will never go away; it will just change and evolve and appear different over time. My small-town is blinded by the illusion of harmony, color-blindness, perceived inclusion, and "I'm not a racist" mindset, as described in Bonilla-Silva's book (2017) titled *Racism without 'racists'*. My small-town is "honestly" clueless and has no idea of the role white privilege plays in its little society. Fasching-Varner (2013) explained it best in referencing Ladson-Billings (1994) notion that every person is a byproduct of slavery in an interview about his book titled *Working Through Whiteness*: "If we wear cotton shirts or eat sugar, we benefit from an industry created on the backs of slave labor. So every White person in the U.S. has an obligation to think about his or her identity. How are they privileged? Where are spaces where they go where their privilege happens and they are not aware of it" (Fasching-

Varner 2013)? No one in my small-town seems to be critically examining the spaces to challenge the lens in which they live and breathe, except for me, the outsider-within.

Conclusion

Healthy racial identity development is believed to be the ultimate transformation of self. Black identity development often involves going through some stages of development simultaneously and, as Erikson's (1959) psychosocial theory explained, some people can become stuck in a stage that plays out in their lives over time.

According to Benjamin, Constantine, Richardson, and Wilson (1998):

Healthy racial identity development is achieved when Blacks progress through a series of linear stages commencing with degrading thoughts and feelings about themselves and other Blacks accompanied by idealized beliefs about whites, and ends with internalized positive feelings about themselves, other Blacks and other racial groups (p. 96).

I believe that it is important for Blacks to be aware of the historical ramifications of what it means to be Black. I believe that it should be a civic duty and responsibility to put thoughts, ideas, and programs into action to help educate and uplift the Black community. Pope-Davis, Liu, Ledesma-Jones, and Nevitt (2000) stated that "identification with one's racial and cultural group represents a complex process" (p. 101), which does not happen overnight. This is why educational spaces are so important. They allow students to develop and interact with others from different backgrounds, thus allowing both students and teachers to see one another from a lens other than race. In the right context, culturally relevant educational spaces make education more equitable for all those involved. Culturally relevant teaching practices help all students explore their histories, build positive self-esteem, and develop a healthy racial identity. With more culturally relevant and responsible educational spaces, we might have less Black people

who are uncomfortable around other Black people. Maybe we would never have to hear the words, “Oohh, that is too many Black people for me.” And consider code switching- the mandatory function that Blacks have to navigate in and out, back and forth, as they go from White spaces back to Black spaces. Would code switching even exist to the extent it currently does?

Blacks in America will always receive late invitations to sit at the table because that is the way our country was founded, but if given even semi-equitable resources and opportunities, Blacks have shown to be wave makers. We are intellectuals, politicians, lawyers, doctors, governors, and even presidents on limited resources and systematic structures that were not made with the Black person in mind. To quote my major professor and advisor Dr. R. Mitchell in the above-mentioned interview about Dr. Fasching-Varner’s book on finding White racial identity, Mitchell stated “If we look at the infrastructures of society, those were decisions made by white people” (Stelly, 2013). Imagine what the U.S. would be like if race was not a social construct to oppress marginalized groups of people. Imagine. No more flies in the buttermilk.

I plan to develop themes from the research I am gathering about Black identity development, racial space, and critical race theories and will explore at what stage in the Black identity development process Blacks distrusting other Blacks occurs. How does colorism play out in the stages of development? Is value added by having Black teachers in educational spaces? If a person has a healthy identity, then why would you ever hear them say, “I would never teach at a HBCU”, although they are a product of the college or universities finest resources? These questions remain unanswered as I have found nothing in the existing current literature.

In the words of Hurston (AZ quotes, 2018), “If you want that good feeling that comes from doing things for other folks then you have to pay for it in abuse and misunderstanding.” I am aware of Hurston’s statement and as unfavorable as my decision is to document the educational spaces in my small-town, I am walking in my purpose. In hindsight and upon reflection, my educational experiences could be perceived as privileged to some. If you consider my experience privileged, imagine what the experience was like for some of my Black classmates. For things to change, people must be aware of the unspoken truths that have suffocated some, emotionally wounded others, motivated a few, and empowered me. “I may play your game, but I am not your pawn,” said the fly in the bowl of buttermilk (Burrell-Craft, 2018).

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A MIXED-METHODS ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL SPACES AND BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

A significant body of literature has examined how racial identity attitudes predict academic achievement of Black students attending predominately White institutions and how racial identity predicts attitudes towards counseling (Constantine, Warren, & Miville, 2005; Helms & Carter, 1991; Nickerson, Helms, & Terrell, 1994). Racial identity studies have also sought to predict student attitudes about race and psychological adjustment and coping. Cross (1971) sought to trace the Black journey from self-hate to self-healing through his Nigrescence theory. As complicated as Blackness is, no one study in isolation will ever unpack its brilliance, excellence, resilience, nastiness, and multi-facetness. This mixed-methods analysis is one of many attempts to explore more critically the correlation between educational spaces, places, and Black identity development.

Literature Review

The concept of identity and identity development was initially presented by Sigmund Freud, who referred to identity or “inner identity...as an individual’s link with the unique values, fostered by a unique history of his people” (Erikson, 1959, p. 102). Prior to the 1970s, there were no available models specific to the identity development of African Americans (Helms, 1990). Models that existed prior to 1970 were focused on deficit model analysis which sought to explain the deficiencies inherent in the Black “personality” or identity (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990a). Black identity development research has significantly increased over time because of the contribution and development of Nigrescence models of racial identity development theory by Cross

(1991, 1971). Prior to this development, the experience of African Americans was viewed through the lens of the dominant culture that resulted in consistent misdiagnosis or distorted interpretation of the African American experience (Baldwin & Bell, 1985; Cross, 1995, 1991; Hauser & Kasendorf, 1983; Helms, 1990a; Hilliard, 1992; Semaj, 1981). Nigrescence can be defined as the developmental process by which a person “becomes Black”, where Black is defined as a psychological connection with one’s race rather than mere identification of the color of one’s skin.

In his famous work, *The Souls of Black Folks*, DuBois (1903) described the experience of being an African American as “hindered in their natural movement, expression, and development” (pp. 130-131). DuBois introduced the concept of “dual consciousness” when expressing how the African Americans often have a split or counterpart identity as a survival tool:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of White Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face (p. 4).

Like DuBois’ dual consciousness, Cross (1995, 1991, 1978, 1971) understood the complexity of Black identity development and designed the Nigrescence model that describes the Black American process of self-actualization. According to Cross, Black identity is developed within a transformative paradigm within which Blacks go through four stages. A description of each of these stages follows.

Pre-Encounter

The first theme is described as pre-discovery of one's racial identity. Pre-encounter attitudes are pro-White and anti-Black. In this stage, Blacks identify with the dominant White culture and reject their own culture. The person lacks the awareness of the sociopolitical implications of being Black in America and prefers to think in terms of a colorblind society.

Encounter

The second theme is characterized by explorations of aspects of one's Black identity as a result of some critical moment or incident regarding race. This stage has two steps, encounter and personalize. In the encounter step, an event happens that shapes how one views their race. Personalize occurs when the individual takes action as a result of the personal impact the event evoked on that person's world view.

Immersion-Emersion

This theme marks the transition between the old and the emerging Black identity. The immersion-emersion stage of Nigrescence addresses the most sensational aspect of Black identity development, for it represents the vortex of psychological Nigrescence (Cross, 1991). The individual becomes immersed in Black culture during this stage.

Internalization

The fourth theme depicts individual comfort in terms of racial identity. The individual has a heightened awareness of what being Black means and is able to have effective cross-cultural interactions. "Black identity functions to fulfill the self-protection, social anchorage, and bridging needs of the individual" (Cross, 1991, p. 220). Internalization-commitment focuses on the long-term interest of Black affairs over an extended amount

of time (Cross, 1991). The highest level of Black identity development is a stage in which the individual reaches a level of self-concept and is comfortable with their identity and committed to transcending racism and in confronting all forms of cultural oppression.

Nigrescence has its merits in illustrating issues related to Black identity development. A number of historical, social, economical, and anthropological issues still need exploration and representation. No development models are available to interpret or clarify the numerous factors that have impacted and influenced Black identity development. “Social scientists argue that assessment in the various areas of African American life and functioning must be culturally specific to the social/cultural reality of African American people” (Baldwin & Bell, 1985, p. 62.)

Racial Space Theory

Since 2000, a growing number of scholars have begun to explore how spatial analysis of racial processes “teaches us things about race we cannot know by other means” (Knowles, 2003, p. 78). Empirical studies scattered across the disciplinary landscape contribute to what could be considered a growing body of research into the links between race and space (e.g. Anderson, 1995; Feld & Basso, 1996; Pulido, 2000; Delaney, 2002; Razack, 2002; Knowles, 2003; Bullard, 2007; Lipsitz, 2007; Woods & McKittrick, 2007; Nelson, 2008; Bullard & Wright, 2009).

Extending the exploration of the Black experience in school by examining both the impact of race and its various changes over time and space has provided a core basis for the theory of racial space (Neely & Samura, 2011). Neely and Samura (2011) built upon the analysis of CRT by including the lens of space. Their work built upon Knowles’

(2003) theoretical underpinnings that suggested, “the social constructions of space illuminates the social constructions of race and vice versa” (p. 78).

Neely and Samura’s (2011) theory of racial space outlined four ways that racial and spatial processes intersect: (1) Both race and space are contested; (2) Race and space are fluid and historical; (3) Race and space are interactional and relational; and (4) Race and space are defined by inequality and difference (p. 1938). Neely and Samura (2011) suggested that examining race and racism within any milieu must be conducted within a sociohistorical context because the way in which race and racism have been defined and experienced by people changes over time and space. Knowles (2003) stated racism is encountered and reworked in place and over time. Embedded in spaces of domination are layers of racialized social histories and experiences, lived and remembered archives that provide the grist for community building, organizing, and action. Neely and Samura (2011) suggested that within any locale the lived experiences of Black people in the U.S. have been influenced by social structures, spatial arrangements, and institutions, which change over time as historical conditions have changed and disappeared. Spatial perspective on race may provide a useful lens for understanding racism and provide language for explaining its persistence in educational settings.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the association educational spaces/places have on Black identity development. A mixed-methods study was chosen to try to yield the most comprehensive results possible. The quantitative approach examined the correlation of the categorical variables of space/place alongside the continuous variable of the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (BRIAS). The

qualitative approach explored the educational experiences of Black professionals to make sense of their journey, as it related to their identity development.

Conceptual models like the Nigrescence theory attempt to outline mechanisms to explain shifts in one's racial identity attitudes. Nigrescence is the process of becoming Black. This mixed-methods investigation was designed to address the gaps in the literature by gathering the educational experiences of Black professional adults to explore whether, in their narrative responses, educational experiences and spaces/places revealed an association to their Black identity development. This call for a more purposeful theorization of how race is implicated in Black educational experiences and outcomes is consistent with that of critical race scholars. As a budding critical race theorist, this author sought to examine how racism shapes educational experiences and outcomes by studying (a) how the discourses that emerge in and around schools and students are not neutral but, are "embedded in them values and practices that normalize racism" (Duncan, 2002, p. 131; Rousseau & Tate, 2003); (b) how the historical legacy of racism structures group advantage and disadvantage in school (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995); and (c) how the narratives of people of color are central to analyzing and understanding these phenomena (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

Research Questions

Quantitative: Does the space and place where Black professionals grew up and received their formal and post-secondary education have an association with their scores on the Black racial identity attitude scale?

Qualitative: How do Black professionals perceive their educational experiences as they relate to the process of Nigrescence in Black professionals?

Method

Participants in this mixed methods study consisted of 40 Black professionals throughout the U. S. Using phenomenology as a qualitative research method, the examination focused on understanding the meaning or “universal essence” (Creswell, 2007, p.58) of the lived experiences of people who shared that experience. A qualitative methodological approach, incorporating oral history interviews (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Thompson & Bornat, 2000), was used to collect data from participants. Participants also, or in place of the oral interview, completed an online survey/questionnaire, and completed the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (BRIAS; formerly RIAS-B, Helms, 1990), a measure of Black Americans’ attitudes about race as tracked through the stages of Nigrescence. A quantitative correlational analysis was performed to identify the degree to which the continuous variables (Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, and Internalization) were associated with the categorical variables (space/place). Space consists of All Black, mostly Black, all White, mostly White, equally diverse, Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCU), and/or predominately White institutions (PWI). Place consists of rural, suburban, or urban geographical locations.

The engagement of the Black educational experience will be situated within the context of the lived experiences of the participants (Yull, 2014). Oral history methods will illuminate how individuals experience, create, and make sense of the rules and roles of the social worlds they live in (Janesick, 2007), along with the narrative questionnaire responses. Cruz (2001) stated that scholars of color have to “create and develop alternative spaces and methodologies for the study of their communities” (p. 658) to more fully and appropriately capture and represent lived experiences among populations of

color. Oral history is a subjective and personal form of evidence – but this is also one of its great strengths. In the words of Italian oral historian Alessandro Portelli (1981), oral sources ‘tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did... Subjectivity is as much the business of history as the more visible “facts”...’. General interview methods allow the researcher to gather data that is specific to research questions that are asked (Seidman, 2006).

This Method section includes the following sections: participants, procedure for data collection, measures, data analysis, and researcher positionality.

Participants

Participants for this study were selected by a purposeful sampling approach. Volunteers were solicited through social media sites, recommendations from colleagues, and a Black graduate organization at a large PWI in the South. Participants were those individuals who self-identified as descendants of slaves. The criterion of slave ancestry is important because as Ogbu and Simons (1998) suggested, Black people who are descendants of slaves respond to issues of Blackness and Whiteness differently than those in other Black communities. According to Ogbu and Simons (1998), the historical and sociocultural adaptation of a minority group into U.S. society is linked to “their response to their own history within the society and their subsequent treatment or mistreatment by White Americans”. Participants included 40 Black professionals from across geographic regions in the United States. Regions where participants were raised were 50% rural, 22.5% urban, and 27.5% suburban. Participants self-reported the educational spaces in which they grew up were 7.5% in all Black space, 20% mostly Black, 2.5% all White, 37.5% mostly White, and 30% equally diverse. Of the participants who attended college

for undergraduate studies, 47.5% attended a historically Black college or university and 50% attended a predominately White institution. Ninety percent of the participants identified their race as Black, 2.5% mixed race, and 7.5% as other.

Procedure

Participants were informed of the purpose and general nature of the study, which was to examine if there is a correlation between Black identity development and educational spaces. Participants were not asked to include their names, but were asked to self-identify their race, educational space where they grew up, and type of college they attended for undergraduate studies. They were provided numerous opportunities to share narratives based on their various experiences and they completed the BRIAS.

A Qualtrics electronic survey was sent to Black professionals via email, GroupMe account for a Black college graduate group, and social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). Three oral history interviews were conducted for those participants who were over the age of 85. Of the 40 survey/questionnaires that were returned, one was missing several variables of data; therefore, thirty-nine (n=39) were used in this study.

Measures

Geographical location was a categorical variable that measured the location where participants grew up (Place). This variable consisted of three categories: 1 for rural, 2 for urban, and 3 for suburban. Space was a categorical variable that measured the racial composition of the educational space in which participants received their education. This categorical variable consisted of seven categories: 1 for All Black, 2 for mostly Black, 3 for All White, 4 for mostly White, 5 for equally diverse, 6 for HBCU, and 7 for PWI.

The Black Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (Helms, 1990; Helms & Parham, 1996; Parham & Helms, 1981) was developed based on Cross's (1978) assumption that, as African Americans move from a position of degrading their racial identity to feeling secure with their racial identity, they progress through four identifiable stages: Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion, Internalization, and Internalization/Commitment. The BRIAS assesses Black persons' attitudes about themselves; the long form of the BRIAS consists of 50 attitude statements with a corresponding 5-point Likert-type response format (1-strongly agree to 5- strongly disagree). The BRIAS is scored by averaging rating for the appropriate keyed items assigned to each of the five subscales. Averaged subscale scores range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of the attitudes represented by each subscale.

The original version of the racial identity attitude scale was derived from the responses of 54 college students attending a predominately White Midwestern university. Normative samples were drawn from both predominately White and historically Black universities (Pyrañt & Yanico, 1991). Internal consistency reliability estimates for the BRIAS are reported for each stage of racial identity: Pre-encounter .69, Encounter .50, Immersion .67, and Internalization .79 (Helms & Parham, 1985).

Data Analysis

The data were examined using quantitative and qualitative analysis and SPSS, a quantitative software package used for interactive, or batch, statistical analysis, and Atlas.ti, a qualitative software. The Atlas.ti software made coding more efficient and effective. It allowed attention to be given to the themes that emerged through the experiences of Black professionals across their educational encounters. Qualtrics

software allowed participants to directly type their narrative responses into the survey, therefore eliminating the need for transcribing. The Qualtrics software allowed for those narrative responses to be extracted and downloaded for review and coding. Only the three oral history interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher's primary role was to capture the educational experiences of Black people and how those experiences have shaped their lives and their identity. The positionality of the researcher is an important component in the process of qualitative research. As Jones, Torres and Aminio (2006) suggested, the positionality of the researcher influences how the data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted for meaning. Patton (2015) stated that the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study.

This study considered the perceptions and experiences that Black people have of and with the educational system in the U.S. As a Black woman who has navigated through school systems in many parts of the U.S., I have a strong interest in and opinion about how schools affect the lives of Black people. I have seen first-hand how important an educational space is for Black people. It can set one on a path to higher education and meaningful employment while simultaneously directing others down the school to prison pipeline.

As a Black woman engaging in research about Black people, I brought strength, credibility, and control to my study in my ability to understand the racialized identities of Black people. My experience and knowledge of the educational system as both an

educator and a student strengthened my position as a researcher. Hatchett and Schuman (1975) told us that “the race of the interviewer is significant when assessing subject’s responses to topics such as education” (p. 525). The goal of this researcher was to study the phenomenon called the Black educational experience and arrive at some “truth” representative of the researcher’s and the participants’ voices, perspectives, and narratives, while not privileging my voice. According to Nieto (1994) researchers can acquire this “truth” in research when they value and listen to the self, to others, and to the self in relation to others.

Findings

Correlational analysis

Geographical regions across the U.S. were represented in this study (N = 30) as participants were scattered from Louisiana to Upstate New York to California. The categorical variable of “place” yielded 50% of self-reported participants growing up in a rural area, 22.5 % in an urban area, and 27.5% in a suburban area.

In preliminary analysis of the dataset, a few differences were found in the categorical variables of space. Despite the diverse “places” of the participants, the educational “spaces” in which they grew up and received their formal education were self-reported as 7.5% attending school in an all-Black space, 20% in spaces that were mostly Black, 2.5% all White, 37.5% mostly White, and 30% equally diverse.

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| N | Valid | 34 |
| | Missing | 6 |
| Mean | | 138.03 |
| Std. Deviation | | 12.469 |
| Minimum | | 112 |
| Maximum | | 170 |

Figure 1. Global score for BRIAS (total score computed by adding Q26-Q75)

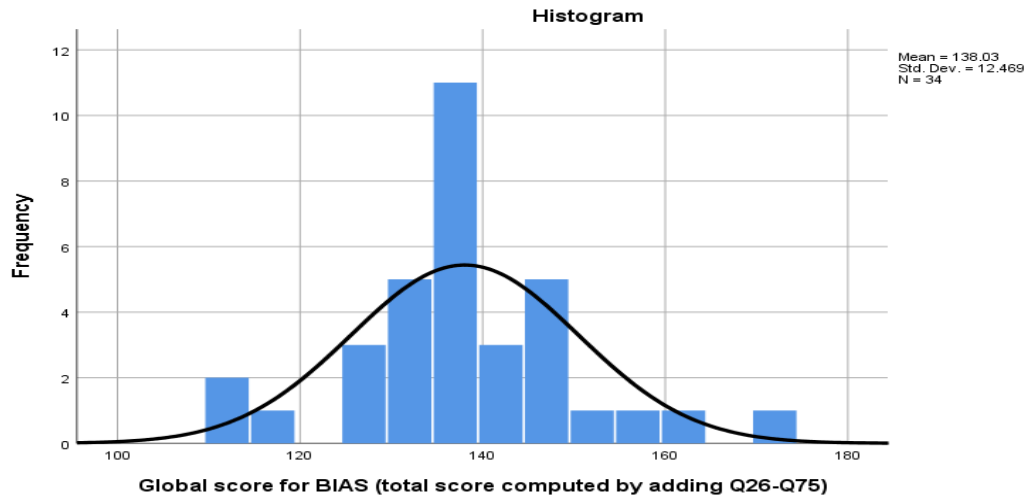


Figure 2. Global score for BRIAS (total score computed by adding Q26-Q75)

The continuous variables of the BRIAS were used in this correlational study to identify any significant relationships between racial identity development and space/place. The analysis yielded a mean score of 138.24 ($M = 138$) with a standard deviation of 12.600 ($SD = 12.6$). This information was important to this study because the analysis contained no outliers. A histogram of the analysis showed the data to be normally distributed.

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---|--------|----------------|----|
| Where you grew up, is it considered rural, urban, or suburban? | 1.76 | .867 | 33 |
| Describe the type of educational space in which you grew up in? | 3.73 | 1.329 | 33 |
| Global score for BIAS (total score computed by adding Q26-Q75) | 138.24 | 12.600 | 33 |

Figure 3. Mean scores of space/place and the BRIAS

The results for the correlation between the categorical variables of space/place and the continuous variables of the BRIAS scale was calculated using Eta. The Eta is a coefficient of nonlinear associations.

| Directional Measures | | | Value |
|----------------------|-----|---|-------|
| Nominal by Interval | Eta | Describe the type of educational space in which you grew up in? Dependent | .878 |
| | | Global score for BIAS (total score computed by adding Q26-Q75) Dependent | .393 |

| Directional Measures | | | Value |
|----------------------|-----|--|-------|
| Nominal by Interval | Eta | Where you grew up, is it considered rural, urban, or suburban? Dependent | .881 |
| | | Global score for BIAS (total score computed by adding Q26-Q75) Dependent | .049 |

Figure 4. Eta correlation for space/place and BRIAS

The results for the correlation between the variables are displayed above. The Eta =.393 represents little if any correlation between space and the BRIAS from a statistical viewpoint. The Eta =.049 represents little to no correlation between place and the BRIAS from a statistical viewpoint.

Educational spaces

The 40 Black professionals who participated in this study have successfully navigated the educational spaces of their formal learning years and continued on to successfully navigate and graduate at 35% at the bachelor's degree level, 30% at the master's level, 17.5% at the post-graduate degree or certification level, and 12.5% at a doctoral level. 47.5% of the participants attended HBCU's and 50% attended PWIs as an undergraduate (Note- One response was missing in the analysis of this question). 52.53% reported that their mother attended college and 42.11% reported their father attended college, with both parents representing HBCU and PWI spaces.

When asked about the post-secondary choices to which the participants thought they had or did not have access, replies ranged from few options due to low American College Testing scores (ACT) to not going to college was "not an option due to college being a rite of passage to prosperity." Some participants thought the military was the only way they could access college due to lack of scholarships, opportunities, and counseling support from their high schools; once in the military they seized the opportunity to pursue a college education. Two additional participants stated in their narrative responses having the opportunity to attend college through the receipt of scholarships.

Four out of 39 participants thought that the educational system had failed them at some point in their journey. Personal experiences of not being allowed to fully participate in educational activities because of race or challenges experienced in attending mostly White schools in their formal years or at their PWI in college were common threads throughout the narrative responses.

“One of my disappointments was with the lack of help for Black students’ transition to college. When it came to hearing about college options, careers, scholarships, financial aid, and the how-to’s to get into college, I was clueless. I had to figure it out and leaned heavily on family, teachers and the church to help navigate the process. It seemed this was a common experience among other Black students at the school.”

Over 50% participants stated that the lack of having a diverse teaching staff had a negative impact on their development or experience. Many who grew up in mostly White schools recalled having a teacher at some point who either believed they were incapable of learning, did not support them when they struggled with concepts in the class, or did not expose them to rigor or advanced concepts. “Not exposing me to more Black scholarship in middle and high school lead me down a weird path with my identity.” One participant who appeared to have switched educational spaces at some point recalled, “The mix of city and suburban students wasn’t necessarily the best for me socially. I struggled with my ‘Blackness’ due to bullying. I guess it was due to how I didn’t act, dress, or talk ‘Black’ according to a lot of my peers who were Black.” Reading through the narrative responses, some experiences seem to be race related, however, some participants did not see the role race played in the experience. Instead they cited either other systems of oppression like location and lack of opportunity.

HBCU versus PWI debate

The debate of an HBCU versus a PWI education has been a frequent conversation in the media, in state funding, and Black homes and communities. When participants were asked about this debate, the responses were varied— some expected, and some

hurtful. Some participants stated that the choice of attending a HBCU was the only option they had. They were not educated on the PWIs in the area and their high schools gave them no information nor set up visits for them to explore this as a possibility. One person said, “PWI was best and HBCUs are not respected.” Another participant said that the HBCUs in their state “were horrible. PWI or die.” Participants stated having parents, community role models, and/or family who had attended a Black college were the reasons they chose to attend a HBCU. “Black colleges were comfortable, familiar, accessible, and fun.”

If one educational space must close, which one should it be and why? 28.57% of the people believed that HBCUs should close and 71.43% believed that the closures should occur at PWIs. Even though the participants more equally attended both educational spaces, the majority chose to keep HBCUs in business. “PWIs do not serve me or my people. Not a fan!” and “PWIs are more welcoming to White students as where HBCUs truly welcome all races” were two responses received. A majority of the respondents referenced the lack of support and resources that Black colleges and universities receive and would keep them open because they survive with constant limitations. Some especially said that they would not be college graduates today if it had not been for a Black institution. Black institutions give all students the opportunity to achieve whereas PWIs do not. One respondent indicated:

“The systematic racism in this country is why I would choose to keep HBCUs open. If more resources were available to HBCUs, then these institutions could help bridge the gaps in educating people of all colors of foundational knowledge such as history. This knowledge will make for a better country.”

Despite the personal experiences of many of the participants, the majority of them had the racial awakening to rationalize the importance and purpose of maintaining Black educational spaces for the growth and development all people. Black educational spaces “culturally are needed because the truth of our history is coming to light. PWIs cover up the contributions made by minorities,” said one participant.

Stages of Black identity development

The stages of Black identity development can better be explored and identified through the participants’ narratives. Study participants took BRIAS to explore and to identify where they were in their current stage of development as Black professionals. In the Pre-Encounter stage people do not acknowledge race as something that has affected their lives. The Pre-Encounter stage can be seen in some of the narrative responses:

“I have had no negative educational experiences. I have completed every goal I’ve set out to accomplish both in high school and college.”

“The system never failed me because I would not allow it. Rules are just that and sometimes they were stringent and difficult to live with. I learned very early in life that everybody has to obey somebody and that alone was a powerful asset in my personal educational victories.”

The Encounter stage can be seen through responses that were impactful to a person’s worldview.

“I grew up watching *A Different World*. I always dreamed of being Black and successful while learning all the things I felt I missed growing up in a predominately White community.”

“I grew up in a town of educators and farmers within one of two Black communities in the town. At the time, the Whites had the medical degrees; juris degrees. The town was predominately White with a 5 to 1 ratio. School integration was difficult but the strength and resiliency of the Black community not only prevailed, it triumphed.”

Powerful experiences like these serve as a catalyst to spur change in thinking during the Encounter stage.

The Immersion-Emersion stage of Nigrescence addresses the most sensational aspect of Black identity development. Statements like “PWIs do not serve me or my people” and “I love the Black culture” represent the “vortex of psychological Nigrescence” (Cross, 1991). Cross said that “immersion is a strong powerful dominating sensation that is constantly energized by rage at White people and culture, guilt at having once been tricked into thinking Black ideas, and developing a sense of pride in one’s Black self, Black people, and Black culture” (p. 203).

In the Internalization stage “Black identity functions to fulfill the self-protection, social anchorage, and bridging needs of the individual” (Cross, 1991, p. 220). One participant stated, “I believe that, as Blacks representing our culture, we should simply know that there will be road blocks and that we must strategically navigate and overcome them with intellect and not emotional immaturity! We must also collectively begin to see each other as worthy and if not help other to obtain that worthiness.” Another participant in the Internalization-Commitment stage stated the place where they grew up influenced their career choices. “There was a lot of subtle racism that I encountered by older White people that influenced me to become an educator in urban areas.”

Limitations

Although the findings from this exploratory investigation offer insights about how Black professionals process and make sense of their Black identity development through educational spaces, there were limitations. Qualitative research can be useful in enriching the complex data regarding racial consciousness. The quantitative methodology of this study may have restricted the ability to explore results in more depth; in addition to, the small sample size limiting generalizability of the results. Including more qualitative measures in this study would allow the additional flexibility needed to open up dialogue with people whose voices have so often been silenced in scholarship (Cox, 2004; Pinro & McKay, 2006). In depth examination of the participants' responses would have led to more rich data relative to their experiences within the educational spaces. It would be beneficial to place a greater emphasis on administering future surveys in-person or via phone to capture more detail and promote a greater experience with the questions that were asked. The data collected was captured essentially through the Qualtrics program survey that consisted of close and open-ended questions. Participant responses may have been restricted or limited to time constraints of the participant at the time of survey completion, or the participant not wanting to type full responses. A few follow-up conversations occurred by phone and three oral history interviews were conducted, but more one-on-one interviews and focus groups would lead to a richer study.

Discussion and Implications

There is a general lack of research exploring the influence of racial identity on space/place. Due to the history and current incidents of racism in research, schools, and in broader settings, filling gaps in this area is important. A heightened understanding is

needed to unpack the complexities of Blackness to better understand and make sense of the multiple variables that intersect with identity development. The purpose of this study was to examine the stages of Black identity development and explore any association to its stages in educational spaces/places of Black professionals.

A mixed-methods study incorporated closed-ended and open-ended questions as an important step toward better understanding of “how” educational spaces function for Blacks. The use of quantitative methods allowed for correlational analysis; the use of qualitative inquiries was a pragmatic decision to allow participants to share their experiences and to dig deeper into the influence educational space has on Black identity development. Consistent with Cross’ (1991, 1995) revised Nigrescence theory, the participants in this study shared their experiences openly and, in follow-up correspondence, shared how their participation in the survey caused them to reflect on many of the questions as they related to their personal experiences. Participants shared how some questions made them uncomfortable and how they were embarrassed by some of their viewpoints and answers. The survey led to increased insights and (re)interpretations of the meaning of race in society, schools, and in their lives. Although the survey may not have led to a change in one’s social identity, the participants gained a better understanding and respect for the value of Blackness.

This racial awareness and awakening in Black people had not been shared, discussed, explored, or explained in the educational spaces in which the Black professional participants grew up. While Nigrescence demands more attention and exploration, it has been suppressed in all areas outside of psychology and some fields of higher education. Exploring the complexities of Blackness in educational spaces will lead

Black students and people to develop racial pride and acceptance of themselves as a people and community. It is believed that the study of Blackness will also lead to an increase in one's commitment to challenge racial oppression at the personal level. A greater impact of this study would allow people of all ethnicities to have a better understanding and point of reference for how identity development influences the paths we take in life, how we think, and our decision processes. Similar to McDonald's (2008) findings in his narrative inquiry, personal (re)interpretations increase the clarity and awareness of race, encourage greater meaning-making about racial issues, and have a lasting influence on a person's identity and life course. This experience and interpretation are consistent with Cross' (1991) conceptualization of the encounter stage of Nigrescence. Understanding these findings in a context of a shortage of literature suggests that the importance of consistent, gradual, and intentional sharing of knowledge about the understanding of Blackness is imperative in all educational spaces. Additional research examining the underlying developmental mechanisms to the creation and maintenance of racial identity attitudes is required (Burrow, Tubman, & Montgomery, 2006) and would enhance understanding of this construct in relation to intersectionality of educational spaces and identity development.

Findings from this study were inconclusive from a quantitative analysis of educational space/place and its influence on a person's identity development. However, qualitative analyses from this study contribute to the literature by offering more detail about racial identity formation or development through the lived experiences of Black professionals from all disciplines and geographical regions. This study affords readers the opportunity to relate, interpret, and unpack the experiences of the participants and, in

turn, (re)flect upon and (re)interpret their own experiences as they relate to their awareness of Blackness and its impact on their lives. How Blackness packs and (un)picks itself in the lives of Black people is complicated at best.

The meaning-making about one's identity is relevant for Black people to understand how they navigate spaces, process decisions and information, and just "be" in peace and power with their Blackness in every capacity and sense of the word regardless of socioeconomic status, age, space, and place. Findings were conclusive that family, and often their spirituality, were central factors that contributed to the success of these Black professionals as they navigated through various experiences and spaces along their journey. As one participant shared,

"In no small way parental teaching was the greatest impact upon my development. However, first-hand knowledge of Ku Klux Klan, racist police officers, great educators and pastors all share in making/molding me into who I am today. In retrospect some of the experiences were great indeed and others best in my opinion to have never existed."

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Conclusion

Myriads of research studies have been written over the past 20 years highlighting the racial gap and disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes between Black and White students, but as revealed in a review of the literature, more studies need to be conducted that examine the intersection of race, space/place, and racial identity development. Using critical race theory as a framework, these three articles explored the function of educational spaces in which Black Americans navigate, grow, and develop as it intersects with race, space/place, and identity development. Approaching my research from multiple perspectives was necessary in this study, as there is no “silver bullet or one size fit all” approach (Fletcher et al, 2016). Collectively, the results from these three studies advance the conversation about the role of Blackness and educational spaces. This research adds to the dearth literature on the identity development as it intersects with educational spaces and space/place. The findings from these three studies indicate that educational spaces play a significant role in Black identity development. These three studies will continue to guide my future research in unpacking the intersectionality of educational spaces and identity development to better inform policy and practice.

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APPENDIX A. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



TO: Kala Burrell-Craft
Education

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 8, 2018

RE: IRB# E11056

TITLE: Black Educational Spaces

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/research

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: Modification

Brief Modification Description: Add Black racial identity attitude scale to article 3 and it became a mixed methods study.

Review date: 10/8/2018

Approved X **Disapproved** _____

Approval Date: 10/8/2018 **Approval Expiration Date:** 5/9/2021

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman _____

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D Landin", is written over a horizontal line.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: Make sure you use bcc when emailing more than one recipient. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT

Title: I AM COMPLICATED, AND SO IS MY BLACKNESS: A TRIFECTA EXPLORATION OF EDUCATIONAL SPACES AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Purpose of Study:

I have a burning need and desire to critically examine the Black educational journey and its double consciousness impact on the lives and identity development of adult Black people. I am conducting a narrative inquiry study that will compose of three separate, but relational studies.

Terms:

Black education spaces – the spaces in which Blacks seek out experiences, people, and settings where they feel the most comfortable to explore and experience growth and change.

Double consciousness - referenced as code switching among some Blacks. It is the ability to see yourself one way but also have the ability to see yourself as the dominant group sees you as well. Then adapt to go in-between both spaces of their cultural group and those of the dominant group.

The first study is a critical narrative literature review that will be conducted to examine how researchers address the concept of intersectionality using critical race theory, racial space theory, and Black identity development. I am most interested in Black identity development and how it intersects with space and place through a critical race theory lens. Through a narrative review of the literature, I sought to answer the following question, how have researchers addressed the intersectionality of Black identity development with space and place through a critical race theory lens?

The second is a mixed-methods study that builds upon the data collected from the first study. In a paragraph, briefly describe the objectives and significance of the study. In coding the data from this study, I hope to find correlations between a person's educational journey and their Black identity development. This study will really look at the double consciousness impact on the lives and identity of Black adults (graduate students, Black faculty and staff, Black professionals and working-class people as a sampling of all groups will be used). The Black racial identity scale will be used in this study.

The third study is an autoethnographic reflection of my journey as an outsider-within the educational spaces and places that have shaped my Black identity development. This critical examination will be a combination of the first two studies, but one primarily

focused on my experience of growing up in rural Louisiana. How place, space, power, privilege, and education allowed me access to the “within” group (the group in power) and how that access has shaped my Black identity development.

These studies help fill a gap in the lack of Black educational experience studies that exist. Putting faces, voices, and stories to quantitative studies that currently exist only strengthens the resolve for a true reform of educational policies and procedures like ensuring culturally relevant curriculums, equitable access to resources, and true college readiness for all students.

You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact:

Researcher: Kala Burrell-Craft, College of Education, Kalab@lsu.edu, 443-794-4977.

Supervisor: Dr. Roland Mitchell, College of Education, rwmitch@lsu.edu, 225-578-2156.

Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

Regarding withdrawal during data collection:

- ☐ You understand that if you choose to end participation during data collection, any data collected from you up to that point will be retained by the researcher but handled according to confidentiality guidelines stated above.

Regarding withdrawal after data collection:

- ☐ You understand that your data is being collected anonymously and therefore cannot be removed once data collection has ended. Confidentiality guidelines will be followed to ensure your anonymity.

I agree to be audio-recorded

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to be video-recorded

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to be photographed

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to the use of direct quotations

☐ Yes ☐ No

I allow my name, photograph, and/or video recording to be

☐ Yes ☐ No

identified in any presentations or publications resulting from this study

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities. If you have any questions, please contact Kala Burrell-Craft at Kalab@lsu.edu or Dr. Roland Mitchell at Rwmitch@lsu.edu. This study has been approved by the LSU IRB. For questions concerning participant rights, please contact the IRB Chair, Dr. Dennis Landin, 225-578-8692, or irb@lsu.edu.

Your Signature Confirms:

- I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.
- I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.
- A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Let's begin by discussing the city/town where you grew up. Where did you grown up? What was your neighborhood/town like when you were growing up there?

How would you describe your neighborhood/town where you grew up? In answering this question you can focus on the people, the families, the organizations, demographics, or anything else that stands out to you the most in thinking about this place.

People have different ways of viewing the way their places function. How would you compare your viewpoint of your "place" to the way your parents (or guardians) view that "place"? Can you tell me more about what makes you think that you have a different or similar view of your "place" than your parents or guardian?

How do you think growing up in this place has influenced who you are today?

Sometimes a common experience, language, or way of being leads a person to identify themselves as part of a group or community. Is there a community with which you identify? Which community is that? What makes you identify with that community?

In your profile survey you said that your (mother, father, and/or guardian) has a (level) education. Is that correct? Can you tell me a bit about how you went about making the decision to go to college? How did you go about choosing a college? What post-secondary choices did you feel you had (or did not have)? How has your parents or families' educational experiences influenced your educational experiences?

Can you tell me about the teachers, community members, clubs, and/or organizations that you feel played an intricate part in your decision to go to college (or not)?

Can you now tell me more about the influences that shaped your decision to attend the college you chose?

Black racial identity attitude scale (50 Likert-scale type questions)

Probe Question(s)

How familiar are you with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions?

Describe the type of educational space in which you grew up in? Mostly Black, mostly white, or diverse? What type of educational space did you choose to attend for college? Describe the type of space do you feel most comfortable? to work in? Live in? To just "be" in?

Describe a time or share an experience when you felt the educational system has worked for you? Describe a time or experience in which you feel the system failed you.

Follow-up Question(s)

What are your favorite and least favorite aspects of HBCU's? What are your favorite and least favorite aspects of PWI's?

If one educational space had to close, HBCU's or PWI's, which one should it be and why?

Racial Battle Fatigue, coined by William A. Smith in the early 2000's, describes how Black students and Black professionals have trouble concentrating, become fatigued, develop headaches, and even high blood pressure when navigating personal and professional spaces that have historically favored White people.

Exit Question(s)

Is there anything else you would like to share about your educational journey that you feel may be relevant to this study?

APPENDIX D. BLACK RACIAL IDENTITY ATTITUDE SCALE

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree Strongly | Agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1. I believe that being Black is a positive experience. • • •
2. I know through experience what being Black in America means.
3. I feel unable to involve myself in White experiences and am increasing my involvement in Black experiences.
4. I believe that large numbers of Blacks are untrustworthy.
5. I feel an overwhelming attachment to Black people.
6. I involve myself in causes that will help oppressed people.
7. I feel comfortable wherever I am.
8. I believe that White people look and express themselves better than Blacks.
9. I feel very uncomfortable around Black people.
10. I feel good about being Black, but do not limit myself to Black activities.
11. I often find myself referring to White people as honkies, devils, pigs, etc.
12. I believe that to be Black is not necessarily good.
13. I believe that certain aspects of the Black experience apply to me, and others do not.
14. I frequently confront the system and the man.
15. I constantly involve myself in Black political and social activities (art show, political meetings, Black theater, etc.).
16. I involve myself in social action and political groups even if there are no other Blacks involved.
17. I believe that Black people should learn to think and experience life in ways similar to White people.
18. I believe that the world should be interpreted from a Black perspective.
19. I have changed my style of life to fit my beliefs about Black people.
20. I feel excitement and joy in Black surroundings.
21. I believe that Black people came from a strange, dark, uncivilized continent.
22. People, regardless of their race, have strengths and limitations.
23. I find myself reading a lot of Black literature and thinking about being Black.
24. I feel guilty and/or anxious about some of the things I believe about Black people.
25. I believe that a Black person's most effective weapon for solving problems is to become a part of the White person's world.
26. I speak my mind regardless of the consequences (e.g., being kicked out of school, being imprisoned, being exposed to danger).
27. I believe that everything Black is good, and consequently, I limit myself to Black activities.
28. I am determined to find my Black identity.
29. I believe that White people are intellectually superior to Blacks.
30. I believe that because I am Black, I have many strengths.
31. I feel that Black people do not have as much to be proud of as White people do.
32. Most Blacks I know are failures.
33. I believe that White people should feel guilty about the way they have treated Blacks in the past.

34. White people can't be trusted.
 35. In today's society if Black people don't achieve, they have only themselves to blame.
 36. The most important thing about me is that I am Black.
 37. Being Black just feels natural to me.
 38. Other Black people have trouble accepting me because my life experiences have • been so different from their experiences.
 39. Black people who have any White people's blood should feel ashamed of it.
 40. Sometimes, I wish I belonged to the White race.
 41. The people I respect most are White.
 42. A person's race usually is not important to me.
 43. I feel anxious when white people compare me to other members of my race.
 44. I can't feel comfortable with either Black people or White people.
 45. A person's race has little to do with whether or not he/she is a good person.
 46. When I am with Black people, I pretend to enjoy the things they enjoy.
 47. When a stranger who is Black does something embarrassing in public, I get embarrassed.
 48. I believe that a Black person can be close friends with a White person.
 49. I am satisfied with myself.
 50. I have a positive attitude about myself because I am Black.
- (RIAS; Parham & Helms, 1981)

APPENDIX E. PERMISSION



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

James L. Welch Hall (WH) 450

PHONE: (310) 243-3301

FAX: (310) 243-3858



October 11, 2018

Kala Burrell-Craft
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership and Research Program
Louisiana State University

Dear Kala,

This letter constitutes my permission to use the Racial Identity Scale for your research. I only ask that you keep me posted on your results as they become available.

Good luck!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas Parham".

Thomas A. Parham, Ph.D.
President

VITA

Kala N. Burrell-Craft is a native of Oak Grove, Louisiana. Kala received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in 1999 from Bowie State University, Bowie, Maryland. She continued her education at University of Phoenix (online) by earning a Master's Degree in Special Education in 2006. During the Spring of 2009, Kala entered an accelerated post-graduate Educational Leadership program at Towson University, Towson, Maryland earning a certificate in Organizational Leadership & Change in Spring 2010; granting her eligibility to pursue leadership opportunities in the Pre-K-12 educational setting. Kala earned an Education Specialist Degree (Ed.S.) focusing on Educational Leadership in December of 2017 from Louisiana State University. Kala is currently serving as a middle school principal at an urban school here in Baton Rouge. Upon graduating from LSU with her Ph.D., Kala hopes to continue engaging in critical research at the collegiate level and earn tenure at a Research I institution; while continuing to support urban schools in practicum and scholarship.